
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 277

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES' RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE CODE OFFICIAL CAREER PATHWAY, THE FIRE SAFETY CODE, BURN INJURY REPORTS AND STATE BUILDING CODE PROVISIONS RELATING TO ACCESSIBILITY.

SUMMARY

This bill makes various changes that, among other things, affect the state fire marshal, by setting new requirements and expanding her authority. Generally, the bill:

1. requires her to convene a working group within the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) to study the code official career pathway (§ 1);
2. authorizes her to issue, upon anyone's request, official interpretations of the Fire Safety Code, including on the applicability of any code provision (§ 2); and
3. requires the Department of Public Health (DPH) to annually report to her on burn-related injuries (§ 3).

Additionally, the bill repeals provisions that currently require (1) certain health officials to report if they treated certain burn victims and (2) the state fire marshal to compile that reporting. It also repeals a building code statute related to accessibility and replaces its provisions governing certain variations of and exemptions from the State Building Code with similar provisions setting a different standard for approval that has no deadline for decision making.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026, except the working group provision is effective upon passage.

CODE OFFICIAL CAREER PATHWAY WORKING GROUP (§ 1)

Under the bill, the working group's members are the state fire marshal, all members of the Fire Marshal Training Council, and three members of the Joint Council of Connecticut Fire Service Organizations appointed by the joint council. The state fire marshal must schedule the working group's first meeting within 60 days after the bill passes.

The working group's study must include an (1) analysis of any statutory or regulatory changes needed to create a more accessible entry into the code official career pathway in Connecticut, as informed by national professional qualifications and best practices for professional development, and (2) examination of the current inspection schedules and requirements applicable to local fire marshals.

By January 1, 2027, the working group must report its findings and recommendations to the Public Safety and Security Committee and the DAS commissioner, including any recommendations for statutory or regulatory changes needed for a more accessible career pathway for code officials in Connecticut. The working group ends on the date it submits its report or January 1, 2027, whichever is later.

FIRE SAFETY CODE INTERPRETATIONS (§ 2)

The bill's authorization of the state fire marshal to issue official interpretations of the Fire Safety Code upon request is in addition to two similar provisions under existing law that allow the (1) state fire marshal to issue official interpretations of the State Fire Prevention Code and (2) state building inspector to do the same for the State Building Code (CGS §§ 29-291a & 29-252). As is the case with existing law's provisions, the bill requires the state fire marshal to compile and index each Fire Safety Code interpretation and publish them at periodic intervals at least every four months.

DPH REPORTING TO THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL (§ 3)

Starting January 1, 2027, and annually after, the bill requires DPH to report to the state fire marshal's office on (1) all burn injuries and injuries resulting from fireworks or explosives, (2) any death resulting from those injuries or smoke inhalation, and (3) any death to which those injuries or smoke inhalation contributed.

The bill requires DPH to use death certificate information and hospital discharge data provided to it, compile the information contained in the report, publish a statistical abstract, and annually submit the abstract to each local fire marshal and the legislature.

REPEALERS AND CONFORMING CHANGES (§§ 4-7)

Health Care Providers' Burn Injury-Related Reports

The bill eliminates requirements for attending physicians, health care institution directors (and their designees), and health care providers to report on treatment provided for (1) a second or third degree burn to 5% or more of the body, (2) any burn to the upper respiratory tract, (3) laryngeal edema due to the inhalation of superheated air, (4) each case of a burn injury which is likely to or may result in death, and (5) any injury resulting from the use of fireworks. Under current law, they must report immediately by telephone to the local fire marshal of the jurisdiction where the incident that caused the burn occurred, and within 48 hours in writing to the state fire marshal's office. The bill also eliminates the requirement for the state fire marshal's office to compile the reported information and publish a statistical abstract to be submitted annually to local fire marshals and the legislature (CGS § 19a-510a).

Accessibility and the State Building Code

Separately, the bill repeals another law that, generally:

1. requires that the State Building Code be in substantial compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and federal Fair Housing Act (FHA);
2. sets a secondary process for the state building inspector to consider variations of and exemptions from any provision of the State Building Code relating to accessibility to, and use of, buildings and structures by people with disabilities; and
3. prohibits State Building Code variations and exemptions from requiring the construction of a "visitable feature" in a residential home, such as interior doorways with certain widths, accessible

ways to exit such as ramps, or full or half bathrooms on the first floor that are compliant with the ADA (CGS § 29-269).

The bill makes conforming changes to replace references to this repealed statute, substitutes a specific reference to another accessibility-related building code statute (CGS § 29-273) with a more general one to provisions in the State Building Code on accessibility and adaptable dwelling units, and repeals another building code-related statute (CGS § 29-274) that, in combination with the other repeal, is obsolete because it exempts buildings from the other statute's requirements.

The conforming changes effectively replace the repealed statute's process for the above types of variations and exemptions with another existing process for all other types. The two processes are similar except the former requires the state building inspector to review and decide on an application within 30 days after receiving it and allows her to approve a variation or exemption if she determines that the standard or specification would not be feasible or would unreasonably complicate the construction, alteration, or repair in question. The latter does not set a deadline for the inspector to make a decision and instead only allows granting variations and exemptions if strict compliance would entail practical difficulty or unnecessary hardship or is otherwise unwarranted, and only so long as the intent of the law is observed, and public welfare and safety is assured.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Public Safety and Security Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 29 Nay 0 (03/17/2026)