



# House of Representatives

General Assembly

**File No. 313**

February Session, 2026

Substitute House Bill No. 5046

*House of Representatives, April 1, 2026*

The Committee on Public Safety and Security reported through REP. BOYD of the 50th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

## ***AN ACT SUPPORTING FIRST RESPONDER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Subsection (d) of section 10a-77 of the 2026 supplement to  
2 the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu  
3 thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

4 (d) The Board of Regents for Higher Education shall waive the  
5 payment of tuition at the Connecticut State Community College (1) for  
6 any dependent child of a person whom the armed forces of the United  
7 States has declared to be missing in action or to have been a prisoner of  
8 war while serving in such armed forces after January 1, 1960, which  
9 child has been accepted for admission to said college and is a resident  
10 of the state at the time such child is accepted for admission to said  
11 college, (2) subject to the provisions of subsection (e) of this section, for  
12 any veteran, as defined in section 27-103, who performed service in time  
13 of war, as defined in section 27-103, except that for purposes of this  
14 subsection, "service in time of war" shall not include time spent in

15 attendance at a military service academy, which veteran has been  
16 accepted for admission to said college and is domiciled in this state at  
17 the time such veteran is accepted for admission to said college. Said  
18 board shall also waive for any such veteran the payment of any  
19 extension fees under section 10a-26 for educational extension programs,  
20 (3) for any resident of the state (A) sixty-two years of age or older, or (B)  
21 who is a resident of a nursing home, as defined in section 19a-490, and  
22 has maintained residency at such nursing home for not less than thirty  
23 days, provided, at the end of the regular registration period, there are  
24 enrolled in the course a sufficient number of students other than those  
25 residents eligible for waivers pursuant to this subdivision to offer the  
26 course in which such resident intends to enroll and there is space  
27 available in such course after accommodating all such students, (4) for  
28 any student attending the Connecticut State Police Academy who is  
29 enrolled in a law enforcement program at said academy offered in  
30 coordination with the Connecticut State Community College which  
31 accredits courses taken in such program, (5) for any active member of  
32 the Connecticut Army or Air National Guard who (A) has been certified  
33 by the Adjutant General or such Adjutant General's designee as a  
34 member in good standing of the guard, and (B) is enrolled or accepted  
35 for admission to said college on a full-time or part-time basis in an  
36 undergraduate degree-granting program. Said board shall also waive  
37 for any such member the payment of any mandatory fees relating to  
38 such member's enrollment in said institution, including, but not limited  
39 to, any extension fees under section 10a-26 for educational extension  
40 programs, (6) for any dependent child of a (A) police officer, as defined  
41 in section 7-294a, or supernumerary or auxiliary police officer, (B)  
42 firefighter, as defined in section 7-323j, or member of a volunteer fire  
43 company, (C) municipal employee, or (D) state employee, as defined in  
44 section 5-154, killed in the line of duty, (7) for any resident of the state  
45 who is a dependent child or surviving spouse of a specified terrorist  
46 victim who was a resident of this state, (8) for any dependent child of a  
47 resident of the state who was killed in a multivehicle crash at or near the  
48 intersection of Routes 44 and 10 and Nod Road in Avon on July 29, 2005,  
49 [and] (9) for any resident of the state who is a dependent child or

50 surviving spouse of a person who was killed in action while performing  
51 active military duty with the armed forces of the United States on or  
52 after September 11, 2001, and who was a resident of this state, (10) for  
53 any police officer, as defined in section 7-294a, who has been employed  
54 as such an officer in the state for not less than five years, (11) for any  
55 uniformed member of a paid or volunteer fire department, including,  
56 but not limited to, a fire department operated by a federally recognized  
57 Indian tribe in the state, who, as documented by the chief of the  
58 department, has served as such a member in the state for not less than  
59 five years, (12) for any emergency medical responder, emergency  
60 medical technician, advanced emergency medical technician,  
61 emergency medical services instructor or paramedic, as such terms are  
62 defined in section 20-206jj, who has been employed in the capacity of  
63 such responder, technician, instructor or paramedic in the state for not  
64 less than five years by a municipality or nonprofit organization, as  
65 documented by the chief administrator of such municipality or  
66 organization, and (13) for any student attending the state fire school  
67 who is enrolled in a program at said school offered in coordination with  
68 a regional community-technical college that accredits courses taken in  
69 such program. If any person who receives a tuition waiver in accordance  
70 with the provisions of this subsection also receives educational  
71 reimbursement from an employer, such waiver shall be reduced by the  
72 amount of such educational reimbursement. Veterans and members of  
73 the National Guard described in subdivision (5) of this subsection shall  
74 be given the same status as students not receiving tuition waivers in  
75 registering for courses at the Connecticut State Community College.  
76 Notwithstanding the provisions of section 10a-30, as used in this  
77 subsection, "domiciled in this state" includes domicile for less than one  
78 year.

79 Sec. 2. Subsection (d) of section 10a-99 of the 2026 supplement to the  
80 general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu  
81 thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

82 (d) The Board of Regents for Higher Education shall waive the  
83 payment of tuition fees for undergraduate and graduate degree

84 programs at the Connecticut State University System (1) for any  
85 dependent child of a person whom the armed forces of the United States  
86 has declared to be missing in action or to have been a prisoner of war  
87 while serving in such armed forces after January 1, 1960, which child  
88 has been accepted for admission to such institution and is a resident of  
89 the state at the time such child is accepted for admission to such  
90 institution, (2) subject to the provisions of subsection (e) of this section,  
91 for any veteran, as defined in section 27-103, who performed service in  
92 time of war, as defined in section 27-103, except that for purposes of this  
93 subsection, "service in time of war" shall not include time spent in  
94 attendance at a military service academy, which veteran has been  
95 accepted for admission to such institution and is domiciled in this state  
96 at the time such veteran is accepted for admission to such institution.  
97 Said board shall also waive for any such veteran the payment of any  
98 extension fees under section 10a-26 for educational extension programs,  
99 (3) for any resident of the state sixty-two years of age or older who has  
100 been accepted for admission to such institution, provided (A) such  
101 resident is enrolled in a degree-granting program, or (B) at the end of  
102 the regular registration period, there are enrolled in the course a  
103 sufficient number of students other than those residents eligible for  
104 waivers pursuant to this subdivision to offer the course in which such  
105 resident intends to enroll and there is space available in such course  
106 after accommodating all such students, (4) for any student attending the  
107 Connecticut Police Academy who is enrolled in a law enforcement  
108 program at said academy offered in coordination with the university  
109 which accredits courses taken in such program, (5) for any active  
110 member of the Connecticut Army or Air National Guard who (A) has  
111 been certified by the Adjutant General or such Adjutant General's  
112 designee as a member in good standing of the guard, and (B) is enrolled  
113 or accepted for admission to such institution on a full-time or part-time  
114 basis in an undergraduate or graduate degree-granting program. Said  
115 board shall also waive for any such member the payment of any  
116 mandatory fees relating to such member's enrollment in said institution,  
117 including, but not limited to, any extension fees under section 10a-26 for  
118 educational extension programs, (6) for any dependent child of a (A)

119 police officer, as defined in section 7-294a, or supernumerary or  
120 auxiliary police officer, (B) firefighter, as defined in section 7-323j, or  
121 member of a volunteer fire company, (C) municipal employee, or (D)  
122 state employee, as defined in section 5-154, killed in the line of duty, (7)  
123 for any resident of this state who is a dependent child or surviving  
124 spouse of a specified terrorist victim who was a resident of the state, (8)  
125 for any dependent child of a resident of the state who was killed in a  
126 multivehicle crash at or near the intersection of Routes 44 and 10 and  
127 Nod Road in Avon on July 29, 2005, [and] (9) for any resident of the state  
128 who is a dependent child or surviving spouse of a person who was  
129 killed in action while performing active military duty with the armed  
130 forces of the United States on or after September 11, 2001, and who was  
131 a resident of this state, (10) for any police officer, as defined in section 7-  
132 294a, who has been employed as such an officer in the state for not less  
133 than five years, (11) for any uniformed member of a paid or volunteer  
134 fire department, including, but not limited to, a fire department  
135 operated by a federally recognized Indian tribe in the state, who, as  
136 documented by the chief of the department, has served as such a  
137 member in the state for not less than five years, (12) for any emergency  
138 medical responder, emergency medical technician, advanced  
139 emergency medical technician, emergency medical services instructor  
140 or paramedic, as such terms are defined in section 20-206jj, who has been  
141 employed in the capacity of such responder, technician, instructor or  
142 paramedic in the state for not less than five years by a municipality or  
143 nonprofit organization, as documented by the chief administrator of  
144 such municipality or organization, and (13) for any student attending  
145 the state fire school who is enrolled in a program at said school offered  
146 in coordination with a university that accredits courses taken in such  
147 program. If any person who receives a tuition waiver in accordance with  
148 the provisions of this subsection also receives educational  
149 reimbursement from an employer, such waiver shall be reduced by the  
150 amount of such educational reimbursement. Veterans and members of  
151 the National Guard described in subdivision (5) of this subsection shall  
152 be given the same status as students not receiving tuition waivers in  
153 registering for courses at Connecticut state universities.

154 Notwithstanding the provisions of section 10a-30, as used in this  
155 subsection, "domiciled in this state" includes domicile for less than one  
156 year.

157 Sec. 3. Subsection (e) of section 10a-105 of the 2026 supplement to the  
158 general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu  
159 thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

160 (e) Said board of trustees shall waive the payment of tuition fees for  
161 any undergraduate or graduate degree program at The University of  
162 Connecticut (1) for any dependent child of a person whom the armed  
163 forces of the United States has declared to be missing in action or to have  
164 been a prisoner of war while serving in such armed forces after January  
165 1, 1960, which child has been accepted for admission to The University  
166 of Connecticut and is a resident of the state at the time such child is  
167 accepted for admission to said institution, (2) subject to the provisions  
168 of subsection (f) of this section, for any veteran, as defined in section 27-  
169 103, who performed service in time of war, as defined in section 27-103,  
170 except that for purposes of this subsection, "service in time of war" shall  
171 not include time spent in attendance at a military service academy,  
172 which veteran has been accepted for admission to said institution and is  
173 domiciled in this state at the time such veteran is accepted for admission  
174 to said institution. Said board shall also waive for any such veteran the  
175 payment of any extension fees under section 10a-26 for educational  
176 extension programs, (3) for any resident of the state sixty-two years of  
177 age or older who has been accepted for admission to said institution,  
178 provided (A) such resident is enrolled in a degree-granting program, or  
179 (B) at the end of the regular registration period, there are enrolled in the  
180 course a sufficient number of students other than those residents eligible  
181 for waivers pursuant to this subdivision to offer the course in which  
182 such resident intends to enroll and there is space available in such  
183 course after accommodating all such students, (4) for any active member  
184 of the Connecticut Army or Air National Guard who (A) has been  
185 certified by the Adjutant General or such Adjutant General's designee  
186 as a member in good standing of the guard, and (B) is enrolled or  
187 accepted for admission to said institution on a full-time or part-time

188 basis in an undergraduate or graduate degree-granting program. Said  
189 board shall also waive for any such member the payment of any  
190 mandatory fees relating to such member's enrollment in said institution,  
191 including, but not limited to, any extension fees under section 10a-26 for  
192 educational extension programs, (5) for any dependent child of a (A)  
193 police officer, as defined in section 7-294a, or supernumerary or  
194 auxiliary police officer, (B) firefighter, as defined in section 7-323j, or  
195 member of a volunteer fire company, (C) municipal employee, or (D)  
196 state employee, as defined in section 5-154, killed in the line of duty, (6)  
197 for any resident of the state who is the dependent child or surviving  
198 spouse of a specified terrorist victim who was a resident of the state, (7)  
199 for any dependent child of a resident of the state who was killed in a  
200 multivehicle crash at or near the intersection of Routes 44 and 10 and  
201 Nod Road in Avon on July 29, 2005, and (8) for any resident of the state  
202 who is a dependent child or surviving spouse of a person who was  
203 killed in action while performing active military duty with the armed  
204 forces of the United States on or after September 11, 2001, and who was  
205 a resident of this state. If any person who receives a tuition waiver in  
206 accordance with the provisions of this subsection also receives  
207 educational reimbursement from an employer, such waiver shall be  
208 reduced by the amount of such educational reimbursement. Veterans  
209 and members of the National Guard described in subdivision (4) of this  
210 subsection shall be given the same status as students not receiving  
211 tuition waivers in registering for courses at The University of  
212 Connecticut. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 10a-30, as used  
213 in this subsection, "domiciled in this state" includes domicile for less  
214 than one year.

215 Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) As used in this section,  
216 "first responder" means any (1) police officer, as defined in section 7-  
217 294a of the general statutes, (2) uniformed member of a paid or  
218 volunteer fire department, or (3) emergency medical responder,  
219 emergency medical technician, advanced emergency medical  
220 technician, emergency medical services instructor or paramedic, as such  
221 terms are defined in section 20-206jj of the general statutes.

222 (b) The Connecticut Housing Finance Authority shall develop and  
223 administer a program of mortgage assistance to first responders in the  
224 state. Such assistance shall be available to an eligible first responder  
225 under guidelines adopted by the authority for the purchase of a home  
226 used as such first responder's principal residence in the community  
227 served by such first responder. In making mortgage assistance available  
228 under the program, the authority may utilize down payment assistance  
229 or any other appropriate housing subsidies. The terms of any mortgage  
230 assistance may allow the mortgagee to realize a reasonable portion of  
231 any equity gain upon sale of the mortgaged property.

232 Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective January 1, 2027, and applicable to taxable years*  
233 *commencing on or after January 1, 2027*) (a) As used in this section, "eligible  
234 volunteer firefighter" means an individual who is actively serving as a  
235 volunteer firefighter for a fire department in the state and who has  
236 served as a volunteer firefighter for a fire department in the state for not  
237 less than fifteen consecutive years, as documented by the chief of the  
238 department.

239 (b) For taxable years commencing on or after January 1, 2027, each  
240 eligible volunteer firefighter shall be allowed a credit against the tax  
241 imposed by chapter 229 of the general statutes, other than the liability  
242 imposed by section 12-707 of the general statutes. The amount of the  
243 credit shall be one thousand dollars. Any taxpayer claiming the credit  
244 shall provide to the Department of Revenue Services documentation  
245 supporting such claim in the form and manner prescribed by the  
246 Commissioner of Revenue Services.

247 Sec. 6. (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a task force to  
248 study issues relating to the recruitment and retention of public safety  
249 personnel. Such study shall include, but need not be limited to, an  
250 examination of the feasibility and fiscal impact of the state providing (1)  
251 tuition waivers, mortgage assistance and tax credits to correction  
252 officers and judicial marshals, (2) tuition waivers to the dependent  
253 children of police officers, uniformed members of paid or volunteer fire  
254 departments, emergency medical responders, emergency medical

255 technicians, advanced emergency medical technicians, emergency  
256 medical services instructors and paramedics, (3) tuition waivers for  
257 undergraduate and graduate degree programs at The University of  
258 Connecticut to police officers, uniformed members of paid or volunteer  
259 fire departments, emergency medical responders, emergency medical  
260 technicians, advanced emergency medical technicians, emergency  
261 medical services instructors and paramedics, and (4) tuition vouchers to  
262 public safety personnel that can be used at any accredited institution of  
263 higher education in the state.

264 (b) The task force shall consist of the following members:

265 (1) Two appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives,  
266 one of whom has expertise in public safety and one of whom has  
267 expertise in higher education;

268 (2) Two appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate;

269 (3) One appointed by the majority leader of the House of  
270 Representatives;

271 (4) One appointed by the majority leader of the Senate;

272 (5) One appointed by the minority leader of the House of  
273 Representatives;

274 (6) One appointed by the minority leader of the Senate;

275 (7) The Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection,  
276 or the commissioner's designee; and

277 (8) The Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee.

278 (c) Any member of the task force appointed under subdivision (1),  
279 (2), (3), (4), (5) or (6) of subsection (b) of this section may be a member  
280 of the General Assembly.

281 (d) All initial appointments to the task force shall be made not later  
282 than thirty days after the effective date of this section. Any vacancy shall

283 be filled by the appointing authority.

284 (e) The speaker of the House of Representatives and the president pro  
285 tempore of the Senate shall select the chairpersons of the task force from  
286 among the members of the task force. Such chairpersons shall schedule  
287 the first meeting of the task force, which shall be held not later than sixty  
288 days after the effective date of this section.

289 (f) The administrative staff of the joint standing committee of the  
290 General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to public safety  
291 and security shall serve as administrative staff of the task force.

292 (g) Not later than January 1, 2027, the task force shall submit a report  
293 on its findings and recommendations to the joint standing committee of  
294 the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to public  
295 safety and security, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a  
296 of the general statutes. The task force shall terminate on the date that it  
297 submits such report or January 1, 2027, whichever is later.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	10a-77(d)
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	10a-99(d)
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	10a-105(e)
Sec. 4	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 5	<i>January 1, 2027, and applicable to taxable years commencing on or after January 1, 2027</i>	New section
Sec. 6	<i>from passage</i>	New section

**Statement of Legislative Commissioners:**

In Section 2(d)(13), "the university" was changed to "a university" for accuracy.

**PS**      *Joint Favorable Subst.*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

**OFA Fiscal Note**

**State Impact:**

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 27 \$	FY 28 \$
Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA)	CHFA - Cost/ Potential Revenue Impact	Minimal	Minimal
Department of Revenue Services	GF - Revenue Loss	None	Up to 6.5 million
Department of Revenue Services	GF - Cost	None	20,000
Connecticut State Colleges and Universities	OF - Net Revenue Loss	See Below	See Below
Connecticut State Colleges and Universities	OF - Revenue Loss	Up to 2 million	Up to 2 million
University of Connecticut	OF - Revenue Loss	Approx. 680,000	Approx. 680,000

Note: GF=General Fund; OF= Other Funds

**Municipal Impact:** None

**Explanation**

The bill's provisions to support recruitment and retention of first responders result in the fiscal impacts described below.

**Sections 1 - 2** result in an annual net revenue loss to the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) beginning in FY 27. The sections require CSCU to: (1) waive tuition for a variety of first responders, and (2) waive mandatory fees for National Guard members who are currently eligible for a tuition waiver.

First responders who may receive a tuition waiver under the bill's provisions include: (1) paid and volunteer firefighters, sworn state and local police officers, and emergency medical services (EMS) personnel

employed (or serving) in Connecticut for at least five years; and (2) any student attending a state fire school. There are an estimated 42,900<sup>1</sup> paid and volunteer firefighters, sworn police officers, and EMS workers in the state. It is unknown how many have been employed or serving in Connecticut for at least five years.

The tuition waiver revenue loss to CSCU will vary based on the number of first responders who receive a waiver, which could be significant. The table below shows the per student value of a tuition waiver at CSCU. It also shows what the potential revenue loss would be in FY 27 if an additional 500, 1,500, and 2,000 students received the waiver at a CSU or at CT State. The bill's tuition waiver provision does not apply to the UConn.

<b>Examples of Tuition Waiver Value, FY 27</b>		
<b>FY 27 Per Student Value</b>	<b>6,998</b>	<b>4,608</b>
<b># Addt'l Students Receiving Waiver</b>	<b>CSUs Est. Revenue Loss \$</b>	<b>CT State Est. Revenue Loss</b>
500	3,499,000	2,304,000
1,000	6,998,000	4,608,000
1,500	10,497,000	6,912,000

To the extent that this tuition waiver results in increased enrollment at CSCU, the above-described revenue loss is offset by an increase in revenue from fees. The extent of such offsetting revenue gain will depend on the number of first responders who attend CSCU due to the bill's tuition waiver.

The sections result in an additional revenue loss to CSCU of up to \$2 million annually beginning in FY 27. This revenue loss is associated with the bill's waiver of mandatory fees for members of the National Guard who currently receive a statutory tuition waiver. There are 604 National Guard members receiving tuition waivers at CSCU in FY 26.

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<sup>1</sup> This figure does not include students attending a state fire school.

**Section 3** results in an annual revenue loss of approximately \$680,000 beginning in FY 27 for the University of Connecticut. It requires UConn to waive mandatory fees for members of the National Guard who already receive a statutory tuition waiver. There are 173 National Guard members receiving tuition waivers at UConn in FY 26.

**Section 4** requires the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) to establish a new program of mortgage assistance for first responders, which results in costs to CHFA from the authority's own resources beginning in FY 27 associated with developing and marketing the program.<sup>2</sup>

If CHFA provides first responders with existing first-time homebuyer mortgage products at a reduced interest rate, changes to CHFA's operating revenues are anticipated to be minimal.

Costs or revenue loss for providing other forms of assistance would depend on: (1) the number of first responders assisted and (2) the type of assistance provided. Given the low utilization rate of CHFA's other occupation-specific mortgage assistance programs, the bill is not anticipated to materially change the rate of spending.<sup>3</sup>

**Section 5**, which establishes a personal income tax credit of \$1,000 for active volunteer firefighters who have served for at least 15 years, results in a: (1) General Fund loss of up to \$6.5 million annually beginning in FY 28, and (2) one-time cost of \$20,000 to the Department of Revenue Services in FY 28 associated with programming updates to the CTax tax administration system and myconneCT online portal, as well as form modification.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> CHFA is a quasi-public authority that issues its own federally tax-exempt and taxable mortgage revenue bonds. The authority pays its operating expenses using funds derived from the excess of interest income from loans over bond interest expenses.

<sup>3</sup> In 2025, CHFA assisted approximately 3,800 first-time homebuyers. Of these buyers, 27 utilized the Teachers Mortgage Assistance Program, 64 utilized the Military Homeownership Program, and 7 utilized the Police Officer Homeownership Program.

<sup>4</sup> This estimate assumes approximately 6,500 volunteer firefighters would be eligible for the credit.

**Section 6** establishes a task force to study the feasibility and fiscal impact of a variety of tuition waiver programs for public safety personnel. This has no fiscal impact, as it is anticipated that the task force can complete its duties with existing resources.

***The Out Years***

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to the number of first responders qualifying for the above described benefits and the value of those benefits.

**OLR Bill Analysis****sHB 5046*****AN ACT SUPPORTING FIRST RESPONDER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION.*****SUMMARY**

This bill makes various changes to encourage first responder recruitment and retention. Primarily, the bill:

1. offers certain first responders tuition waivers for attending the Connecticut State Community College (CT State) and Connecticut State University System (CSUS) (§§ 1 & 2);
2. waives mandatory fees for any active National Guard member's enrollment at the UConn, CT State, or CSUS (§§ 1-3);
3. requires the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CFHA) to develop and administer a mortgage assistance program for first responders (§ 4);
4. creates a tax credit for eligible volunteer firefighters (§ 5); and
5. establishes a task force to study public safety personnel recruitment and retention issues (§ 6).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026, except that the (1) provisions on the first responder mortgage assistance program take effect October 1, 2026; (2) tax credit provision is effective January 1, 2027, and each tax year on and after then; and (3) task force provision is effective upon passage.

**§§ 1-3 — TUITION AND FEE WAIVERS*****Tuition Waivers for Certain First Responders***

The bill requires the Board of Regents for Higher Education to waive CT State and CSUS tuition for:

1. any police officer (see BACKGROUND) who has been employed as such in Connecticut for at least five years;
2. any uniformed member of a paid or volunteer fire department, including fire departments operated by a federally recognized Connecticut Indian tribe, who, as documented by the chief of the department, has served as a firefighter in Connecticut for at least five years;
3. any emergency medical responder, emergency medical technician, advanced emergency medical technician, emergency medical services instructor, or paramedic, who has been employed in that role in Connecticut for at least five years by a municipality or nonprofit organization, as documented by their chief administrator; and
4. students attending the state fire school who are enrolled in a program offered together with a university that accredits courses in the program.

For CSUS, only tuition fees for undergraduate and graduate programs are waived.

#### ***Connecticut Army or Air National Guard Fee Waiver***

The bill also waives all mandatory fees for a national guard member's enrollment at CT State, CSUS, or UConn. To be eligible, the national guard member must be (1) certified by the adjutant general or his designee as a member in good standing and (2) enrolled or accepted in one of those institutions on a full-time or part-time basis in an undergraduate degree-granting program (or graduate program, for CSUS and UConn). By law, national guard members' tuition and payment of extension fees are already waived.

#### **§ 4 — FIRST RESPONDER MORTGAGE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

The bill requires CHFA to develop and administer a mortgage assistance program for certain Connecticut first responders who are buying a home as their principal residence in the community where they

serve. In doing so, CHFA (1) must use down payment assistance or any other appropriate housing subsidies and (2) may allow the mortgagee to realize a reasonable portion of the property's equity gain when it is sold. Under the bill, the program must cover:

1. police officers;
2. uniformed members of a paid or volunteer fire department;
3. certified emergency medical responders, emergency medical technicians, and advanced emergency medical technicians;
4. certified emergency medical services instructors that teach courses required to become an emergency medical technician; and
5. licensed paramedics.

#### **§ 5 — VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER TAX CREDIT**

Beginning for taxable years starting January 1, 2027, the bill allows eligible volunteer firefighters to claim an income tax credit of \$1,000, except against the withholding tax. Any taxpayer claiming the credit must give the Department of Revenue Services (DRS) supporting documentation as the DRS commissioner requires.

An "eligible volunteer firefighter" is someone who is actively serving as a volunteer firefighter for a fire department in Connecticut and has served for at least fifteen consecutive years, as documented by the fire department's chief.

#### **§ 6 — RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION TASK FORCE**

The bill establishes a task force to study recruitment and retention issues for public safety personnel. The study must examine the feasibility and fiscal impact of the state providing:

1. tuition waivers, mortgage assistance, and tax credits to correction officers and judicial marshals;

2. tuition waivers to police officers' dependent children, uniformed members of paid or volunteer fire departments, emergency medical responders, emergency medical technicians, advanced emergency medical technicians, emergency medical services instructors, and paramedics;
3. tuition waivers for undergraduate and graduate degree programs at UConn to police officers, uniformed members of paid or volunteer fire departments, emergency medical responders, emergency medical technicians, advanced emergency medical technicians, emergency medical services instructors, and paramedics; and
4. tuition vouchers for public safety personnel to any accredited higher education institution in Connecticut.

Under the bill, the task force consists of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) and Education commissioners, or their designees, and eight members appointed by the legislative leaders (two each by the House speaker and Senate president pro tempore and one each by the House and Senate majority and minority leaders). One of the speaker's appointees must have expertise in public safety and the other in higher education. The appointees may be legislators.

All initial appointments must be made within 30 days after the bill passes, and any vacancies must be filled by the appropriate appointing authority.

The speaker and the president pro tempore must select the task force's chairpersons from its members, who must schedule and hold the first meeting of the task force within 60 days after the bill passes.

The Public Safety and Security Committee's administrative staff must serve in that capacity for the task force. The task force must submit its findings and recommendations to the Public Safety and Security Committee by January 1, 2027. The task force ends on January 1, 2027,

or when it submits its report, whichever is later.

**BACKGROUND**

***Definition of Police Officers***

By law, police officers are sworn members of an organized local police department or of the Division of State Police within DESPP, appointed constables who perform criminal law enforcement duties, special appointed policemen, or any member of a law enforcement unit who performs police duties (CGS § 7-294a).

***Related Bill***

sHB 5003, §§ 16-19, reported favorably by the Labor and Public Employees Committee, has substantially similar provisions concerning first responder tuition waivers and a first responder mortgage assistance program.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Public Safety and Security Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 29    Nay 0    (03/17/2026)