



House Bill No. 6941

Public Act No. 23-204

**AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM
ENDING JUNE 30, 2025, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS
THEREFOR, AND PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE AND
OTHER ITEMS IMPLEMENTING THE STATE BUDGET.**

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

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in consultation with the Commissioner of Agriculture, shall develop a strategic plan to (1) provide incentives for the construction of a grocery store in a food desert, and (2) expand opportunities for residents of food deserts to gain access to nutritionally adequate food.

(c) The Commissioner of Economic and Community Development shall file a report on the strategic plan, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, not later than January 1, 2024, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to commerce, the environment, finance, revenue and bonding, human services and planning and development.

Sec. 159. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2023*) (a) For purposes of this section:

(1) "Firefighter" has the same meaning as provided in section 7-313g of the general statutes;

(2) "Compensation" has the same meaning as provided in section 31-275 of the general statutes;

(3) "Municipal employer" has the same meaning as provided in section 7-467 of the general statutes; and

(4) "Interior structural firefighter" means an individual who performs fire suppression, fire rescue, or both, either inside of buildings or in closed structures that are involved in a fire station beyond the incident stage.

(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of chapter 568 of the general statutes, a firefighter diagnosed with any condition of cancer affecting the brain, skeletal system, digestive system, endocrine system, respiratory system, lymphatic system, reproductive system, urinary system or hematological system resulting in such firefighter's death or temporary or permanent total or partial disability, or such firefighter's

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dependents, as the case may be, shall receive (1) compensation and benefits from the account, established pursuant to section 7-313h of the general statutes, in the same amount and in the same manner that would be provided under chapter 568 of the general statutes if such death or disability was caused by a personal injury which arose out of and in the course of such firefighter's employment and was suffered in the line of duty and within the scope of such firefighter's employment, and (2) (A) the same retirement or survivor benefits, from the municipal or state retirement system under which such firefighter is covered, or (B) the disability benefits available from the Connecticut State Firefighters Association pursuant to section 3-123 of the general statutes, that would have been paid under such system if such death or disability was caused by a personal injury which arose out of and in the course of such firefighter's employment and was suffered in the line of duty and within the scope of such firefighter's employment, provided such firefighter has:

(i) Submitted to a physical examination subsequent to such member's entry into service that failed to reveal any evidence of or a propensity for such cancer;

(ii) Has not used cigarettes, as defined in section 12-285 of the general statutes, during the fifteen-year period prior to such diagnosis;

(iii) Was employed for at least five years as (I) an interior structural firefighter at a paid municipal, state or volunteer fire department, or (II) a local fire marshal, deputy fire marshal, fire investigator, fire inspector or such other class of inspectors or investigators for whom the State Fire Marshal and the Codes and Standards Committee, acting jointly, have adopted minimum standards of qualification pursuant to section 29-298 of the general statutes; and

(iv) Has submitted to annual medical health screenings as recommended by such firefighter's medical provider.

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(c) Any individual who is no longer actively serving as a firefighter but who otherwise would be eligible for compensation or benefits pursuant to the provisions of subsection (b) of this section may apply for such benefits or compensation not more than five years from the date such individual last served as a firefighter.

(d) To apply for compensation or benefits pursuant to subsections (b) and (c) of this section, a firefighter shall provide notice to the Workers' Compensation Commission and the municipality in which such firefighter is employed, in the same manner as workers' compensation claims under chapter 568 of the general statutes.

(e) (1) The municipality in which the firefighter is employed shall administer claims submitted pursuant to subsections (b) and (c) of this section in the same manner as workers' compensation claims under chapter 568 of the general statutes. Such municipality shall (A) pay to the firefighter the compensation or benefits such firefighter is entitled to, and (B) submit, in a form and manner provided by the State Treasurer, an application for reimbursement from the firefighters cancer relief account. Payments for reimbursement shall be processed not later than forty five days after such application is received.

(2) Any costs associated with a firefighter's treatment of cancer that are not covered by such firefighter's personal or group health insurance shall be reimbursed, pursuant to this subsection, by the firefighters cancer relief account.

(3) If the firefighters cancer relief account becomes insolvent, a municipality shall have no obligation to continue providing compensation and benefits pursuant to subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of this section and subsection (c) of this section.

(f) A firefighter may request that a denial of compensation or benefits made pursuant to subsection (e) of this section be reconsidered in the

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same manner as workers' compensation claims under chapter 568 of the general statutes.

(g) If a physical examination was required by an employer at the time of the firefighter's employment, as a condition for such employment, or required annually for means of continued employment, a firefighter shall not be required to show proof of such examination in the maintenance of a claim under subsection (b) or (c) of this section or under such municipal or state retirement system.

(h) Any benefits provided under subsection (b) or (c) of this section shall be offset by any other benefits a firefighter or such firefighter's dependents may be entitled to receive from such firefighter's municipal employer under the provisions of chapter 568 of the general statutes or the municipal or state retirement system under which they are covered as a result of any condition or impairment of health caused by occupational cancer resulting in such firefighter's death or permanent total or partial disability.

(i) The State Treasurer shall have the authority to audit reimbursements provided by the account pursuant to subsection (e) of this section.

(j) No payment of compensation made under this section shall be used as evidence in support of any future claim under chapter 568 of the general statutes.

(k) Except as provided in subsections (l) and (m) of this section, any firefighter that receives compensation under this section shall be prohibited from filing a claim under chapter 568 of the general statutes for a diagnosis of cancer.

(l) If the firefighters cancer relief account becomes insolvent, a firefighter that was receiving compensation under this section may file a claim under chapter 568 of the general statutes, within one year of

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receiving notice from the municipality of the firefighters cancer relief account becoming insolvent, for continuation of compensation.

(m) (1) Any survivors of a firefighter that has died from cancer and was receiving compensation under this section may file a claim under chapter 568 of the general statutes within one year of such firefighter's death. Until such claim is approved, such survivor shall continue to receive benefits from the firefighters cancer relief account.

(2) If the survivors of a firefighter that has died from cancer and was receiving compensation under this section do not file a claim under chapter 568 of the general statutes within one year of such firefighter's death, such survivors may continue to receive benefits from the firefighters cancer relief account.

Sec. 160. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a firefighters cancer relief fund advisory committee to annually evaluate the financial solvency of the firefighters cancer relief account established in section 7-313h of the general statutes. Such evaluation shall include, but need not be limited to, (1) analyzing the fund balance, claims data and the quarterly report provided by the State Treasurer pursuant to section 161 of this act, (2) identifying the need for a new funding mechanism for the firefighters cancer relief account, and (3) determining the necessity of purchasing insurance to help maintain the solvency of the account.

(b) The advisory committee shall consist of the following members:

(1) One appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives, who shall have experience in investment fund management;

(2) One appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate, who shall have expertise in the state's workers' compensation program;

(3) One appointed by the majority leader of the House of

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Representatives, who shall have expertise in maintaining solvency;

(4) One appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, who shall have expertise in making investments;

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

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

(7) Two representatives of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities;

(8) One representative of the Uniformed Professional Fire Fighters Association of Connecticut;

(9) One representative of the Connecticut State Firefighters Association;

(10) The State Treasurer, or the State Treasurer's designee;

(11) The Comptroller, or the Comptroller's designee; and

(12) One representative of the Governor's office.

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

(d) All initial appointments to the advisory committee shall be made not later than thirty days after the effective date of this section. Any vacancy shall be filled by the appointing authority.

(e) The speaker of the House of Representatives and the president pro tempore of the Senate shall select the chairpersons of the advisory committee from among the members of the advisory committee. Such chairpersons shall schedule the first meeting of the advisory committee,

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which shall be held not later than sixty days after the effective date of this section.

(f) The administrative staff of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to labor and public employees shall serve as administrative staff of the advisory committee.

(g) Not later than January 1, 2024, and annually thereafter, the advisory committee shall submit a report on its findings and recommendations to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to labor and public employees, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes.

Sec. 161. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) Not later than July 1, 2023, and annually thereafter, the State Treasurer, in consultation with the Connecticut State Firefighters Association, shall submit a report to the advisory committee established pursuant to section 160 of this act on the status of the firefighters cancer relief account established pursuant to section 7-313h of the general statutes and the firefighters cancer relief program established pursuant to section 7-313j of the general statutes. Such report shall include (1) the balance of the account, (2) the projected and actual participation in the program, and (3) the demographic information of each firefighter who receives benefits pursuant to such program, including gender, age, town of residence and income level.

(b) If the State Treasurer determines that the firefighters cancer relief account is approaching insolvency, the State Treasurer shall provide notice to (1) all municipalities currently providing compensation pursuant to section 159 of this act, (2) the Governor's office, (3) the Workers' Compensation Commission, and (4) the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to labor and public employees.

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Sec. 162. Section 7-313h of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2023*):

(a) There is established an account to be known as the "firefighters cancer relief account" which shall be a separate, nonlapsing account within the General Fund. The account shall contain any moneys required by law to be deposited in the account. Moneys in the account shall be expended by (1) the cancer relief subcommittee of the Connecticut State Firefighters Association, established pursuant to section 7-313i, for the purposes of providing wage replacement benefits to firefighters who are diagnosed with a condition of cancer described in section 7-313j, and (2) by the State Treasurer for purposes of providing reimbursement to municipalities that provide compensation and benefits to firefighters diagnosed with a condition of cancer in accordance with section 159 of this act.

(b) The State Treasurer shall invest the moneys deposited in the firefighters cancer relief account in a manner reasonable and appropriate to achieve the objectives of such account, exercising the discretion and care of a prudent person in similar circumstances with similar objectives. The State Treasurer shall give due consideration to rate of return, risk, term or maturity, diversification of the total portfolio within such account, liquidity, the projected disbursements and expenditures, and the expected payments, deposits, contributions and gifts to be received. The moneys in such account shall be continuously invested and reinvested in a manner consistent with the objectives of such account until disbursed in accordance with [section] sections 3-123 and [section] 7-313i and section 159 of this act.

(c) The moneys in the firefighters cancer relief account shall be used solely for the purposes of (1) providing wage replacement benefits to firefighters who are diagnosed with a condition of cancer described in section 7-313j, (2) providing reimbursement to municipalities for payment of compensation and benefits as described in section 159 of this

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act, and (3) to fund the expenses of administering the firefighters cancer relief program established pursuant to section 7-313j and section 159 of this act.