

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE - FEB. 16, 2024

SESSION: The House of Representatives and Senate each convened in session on Wednesday to vote on various judicial nominations. Emergency Certified Senate Bill 111 - An Act Concerning Home Energy Assistance (found [here](#)) was also passed unanimously by each chamber. The bill approves approximately \$17M in additional funding for the state's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program ("LIHEAP") and Operation Fuel. As federal funding is down from prior years and the application rate has increased 8.6% from last year, many recipients have already exhausted their benefits. The bill utilizes American Rescue Plan Act monies for the additional funding to both programs thus avoiding spending cap concerns. The eligibility requirements for each program remain unchanged. It is anticipated approximately \$14M will go toward LIHEAP and \$3.5 to Operation Fuel. In press conferences held by House Democratic and House GOP leadership, both parties expressed disappointment in the waning funding levels and hope the federal government will increase benefits for next year. Governor Lamont signed the bill on Wednesday afternoon.

GOVERNOR LAMONT SEEKS ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

EDUCATION: In a press release on Wednesday, Governor Lamont formally asked the legislature to approve \$43.4M in additional funding toward early childhood education with the bulk of the funds being allocated toward the Care 4 Kids program which helps low-income families pay for childcare costs. The request seeks funds in addition to the \$45M previously approved in last year's budget negotiations. Both House Democratic and Republican leadership noted concern with the request as it suggests a reallocation of funds away from previously approved education funding. As an alternative, Democratic House Speaker Matt Ritter suggested exploring the deposit of funds into a trust to cover the expenses. House Republican Minority Leader Vincent Candelora rebutted that approach saying it "skirts the spending cap and introduces broad policies which are not intended in the second budget year". A copy of the Governor's press release can be found [here](#).

COMMITTEE ORGANIZATIONAL MEETINGS: Many committees of cognizance held organizational meetings this week moving forward various concepts to be raised as bills in areas concerning workers' rights, rideshare and delivery drivers, artificial intelligence, predictable scheduling, alcohol regulation, and prescription drug control. The committees will formally draft bills on the items approved to be heard before public hearings in the coming weeks.

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE - AGENCY BUDGET PRESENTATIONS AND

PUBLIC HEARINGS: The Appropriations Committee began holding meetings on the Governor's Proposed FY 25 Budget Adjustments this week. State agency presentations and public hearings are scheduled to run through February 26. A detailed schedule can be found [here](#).

STATE OFFICES WILL BE CLOSED MONDAY: In observance of President's birthday, the Capitol and Legislative Office Building will be closed Monday, February 19, 2024.