



House of Representatives

General Assembly

File No. 431

February Session, 2026

Substitute House Bill No. 5487

House of Representatives, April 7, 2026

The Committee on Human Services reported through REP. GILCHREST of the 18th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION WORKING GROUP AND INCREASING STATE ASSISTANCE FOR PERSONS WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED AND DEAF.

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

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective January 1, 2027*) (a) The Department of
2 Education shall establish an American Sign Language education
3 working group which shall consist of (1) a representative from each of
4 the following: The Departments of Education and Aging and Disability
5 Services, the Labor Department, the Office of Higher Education, the
6 Connecticut Council of Language Teachers, the American School for the
7 Deaf and the Connecticut Association of the Deaf, and (2) at least one
8 American Sign Language instructor who teaches in a public school in
9 the state.

10 (b) The working group shall provide recommendations to the
11 Department of Education regarding the following:

12 (1) Curriculum guidance for American Sign Language instruction

13 that includes, but is not limited to, aligning such curriculum with
14 nationally recognized proficiency frameworks;

15 (2) Teacher certification standards based on standards established by
16 the American Sign Language Teachers Association and the American
17 Sign Language Proficiency Interview that includes, but is not limited to,
18 (A) establishment of a proficiency benchmark, (B) recognition of an
19 alternative certification pathway for native American Sign Language
20 users and interpreters, and (C) reciprocity with American Sign
21 Language teaching certifications from other states; and

22 (3) Guidance to educator preparation programs in the state
23 concerning, but not limited to, the (A) expansion of American Sign
24 Language and interpretation education programs, (B) creation of
25 educational incentives, such as tuition support, credit enhancement or
26 alternative programs, and (C) establishment of bridge, endorsement or
27 alternative programs for native American Sign Language users and
28 certified interpreters seeking teacher certification.

29 (c) Not later than January 1, 2028, and annually thereafter, the
30 Department of Education shall submit a progress report, in accordance
31 with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint
32 standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of
33 matters relating to education and human services concerning the work
34 of the American Sign Language education working group.

35 Sec. 2. Subsection (d) of section 17a-812 of the general statutes is
36 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
37 *2026*):

38 (d) The Commissioner of Aging and Disability Services may expend
39 up to [ten] fourteen thousand dollars per fiscal year per person twenty-
40 one years of age or older who is both blind or visually impaired and
41 deaf, in addition to any other expenditures for such person, for the
42 purpose of providing community inclusion services through specialized
43 public and private entities from which such person can benefit. The
44 commissioner may determine the criteria by which a person is eligible

45 to receive specialized services and may adopt regulations necessary to
 46 carry out the provisions of this subsection. For purposes of this
 47 subsection, "community inclusion services" means the assistance
 48 provided to persons with disabilities to enable them to connect with
 49 their peers without disabilities and with the community at large.

| | | |
|---|-----------------|-------------|
| This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections: | | |
| Section 1 | January 1, 2027 | New section |
| Sec. 2 | July 1, 2026 | 17a-812(d) |

Statement of Legislative Commissioners:

The title was changed; and in Section 1(b)(3)(B), "alternative route programs" was changed to "alternative programs" for consistency.

HS *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 \$ |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Aging and Disability Services, Dept. | GF - Potential Cost | See Below | See Below |

Note: GF=General Fund e

Municipal Impact: None

Explanation

The bill increases the annual per person cap for the DeafBlind grant program administered by the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) from \$10,000 to \$14,000 per person. This results in a potential cost to ADS to the extent that any individuals receive a grant between \$10,000 and \$14,000. ADS spent \$3,125 per person in FY 25.¹

The bill also establishes a working group for American Sign Language education, which does not result in a fiscal impact.

The Out Years

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to inflation.

¹ Grant spending was \$165,660 in FY 25, disbursed to 53 recipients.

OLR Bill Analysis**sHB 5487*****AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION WORKING GROUP AND INCREASING STATE ASSISTANCE FOR PERSONS WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED AND DEAF.*****SUMMARY**

This bill requires the State Department of Education (SDE) to establish an American Sign Language (ASL) education working group to make recommendations to the department on the following:

1. curriculum guidance for ASL instruction, including aligning the curriculum with nationally recognized proficiency frameworks;
2. teacher certification standards based on those of the ASL Teachers Association and ASL Proficiency Interview, including establishing a proficiency benchmark, recognizing an alternative certification pathway for native ASL users and interpreters, and reciprocity with other states' ASL teaching certifications; and
3. guidance to Connecticut educator preparation programs on (a) expanding ASL and interpretation education programs; (b) creating educational incentives, such as tuition support, credit enhancement, or alternative programs; and (c) establishing bridge, endorsement, or alternative programs for native ASL users and certified interpreters seeking teacher certification.

Under the bill, the working group members include (1) at least one Connecticut ASL public school instructor and (2) one representative each from SDE, the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS), the Department of Labor, Office of Higher Education, Connecticut Council of Language Teachers, American School for the Deaf, and Connecticut Association of the Deaf.

Additionally, the bill increases, from \$10,000 to \$14,000, the amount ADS may spend each fiscal year on community inclusion services for people ages 21 and older who are both blind or visually impaired and deaf.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2027, for the working group provision and July 1, 2026, for the ADS community inclusion services provision.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 23 Nay 0 (03/19/2026)