



Senate

General Assembly

File No. 587

February Session, 2026

Senate Bill No. 263

Senate, April 13, 2026

The Committee on Appropriations reported through SEN. OSTEN of the 19th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the Senate, that the bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING WATER SAFETY AND SWIM INSTRUCTION.

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

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) For the purposes of this
2 section, "eligible participant" means any individual under seventeen
3 years of age who (1) resides in a qualified census tract, as defined in
4 section 4-66c of the general statutes, (2) is eligible for the supplemental
5 nutrition assistance program administered by the Department of Social
6 Services pursuant to the federal Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 and
7 section 17b-2 of the general statutes, or (3) is eligible for the federal
8 Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children
9 administered by the Department of Public Health pursuant to section
10 19a-59c of the general statutes.

11 (b) Not later than May 1, 2027, the Department of Energy and
12 Environmental Protection shall, within available appropriations,
13 establish and administer a program to provide swimming lessons free
14 of charge, on an annual basis, to eligible participants during the summer
15 months. The department may contract with one or more nonprofit

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 \$
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection	GF - Cost	Approx. \$1 million/6,000 lessons

Note: GF=General Fund

Municipal Impact: None

Explanation

The bill results in a significant cost to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), beginning in FY 27, associated with requiring the department to establish and administer a free swim program to certain children who qualify. It is estimated that every 6,000 lessons administered by DEEP will result in an additional cost of approximately \$1 million. The cost estimate is based on a previously funded free swim program administered by DEEP, which provided free swim lessons at various state parks¹.

It is estimated that there are approximately 202,959 SNAP households and 29,768 WIC children who could qualify under the program. The exact number of eligible participants would be dependent upon where the children reside, as only families who reside in a qualified census tract are eligible.

The Out Years

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to the number of lessons administered.

¹ This program was funded with \$1 million in ARPA funds allocated to DEEP (\$500,000 in FY 22 and \$500,000 in FY 23).

OLR Bill Analysis**SB 263*****AN ACT CONCERNING WATER SAFETY AND SWIM INSTRUCTION.*****SUMMARY**

This bill requires the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), by May 1, 2027, and within available appropriations, to establish and administer an annual program for free swimming lessons during the summer to children under age 17 who meet certain criteria. To qualify, participants must live in a qualified census tract or be eligible for either the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) administered by the Department of Social Services, or the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) administered by the Department of Public Health.

The bill also allows DEEP to (1) contract with non-profit organizations that provide swimming lessons and water safety skills instruction for the program's swimming lessons and (2) accept public and private gifts, grants, and donations to create and administer the program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

BACKGROUND***Qualified Census Tract***

A "qualified census tract" is any census tract, during a given year, where either (1) 50% or more of the households had an income less than 60% of the area median gross income or (2) the poverty rate is at least 25%. Qualified census tracts are designated by the U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (26 U.S.C. § 42(d)(5)(B)(ii); see CGS § 4-66c).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Committee on Children

Joint Favorable Change of Reference - APP

Yea 13 Nay 4 (03/03/2026)

Appropriations Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 51 Nay 0 (04/01/2026)