
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 250

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE GLOBAL ENTREPRENEUR IN RESIDENCE PROGRAM.

SUMMARY

This bill requires the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), in consultation with Connecticut Innovations, Inc. and within available appropriations, to develop a three-year Global Entrepreneur in Residence pilot program to facilitate partnerships between resident entrepreneur employers (i.e., private individuals, nonprofits, businesses, and other legal entities offering employment in specialty occupations; see BACKGROUND) and public or private higher education institutions (i.e., “eligible institutions”) to employ resident entrepreneurs at the institution. It allows DECD to collaborate with private individuals and entities, eligible institutions, and resident entrepreneurs to develop the program.

Under the bill, a “resident entrepreneur” is someone who:

1. is employed part-time by a resident entrepreneur employer in a specialty occupation,
2. is not a United States citizen, and
3. wants to move to or remain in Connecticut as a nonimmigrant while employed by a resident entrepreneur employer.

The bill sets specific requirements for program participants, including a requirement that resident entrepreneur employers facilitate the resident entrepreneur’s move to Connecticut by applying to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services for a nonimmigrant H-1B visa (see BACKGROUND).

The bill also requires DECD to annually report to the General

Assembly on the program beginning by December 31, 2024.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Under the bill, eligible institutions and resident entrepreneur employers may apply to participate in the program as DECD requires. The bill requires resident entrepreneurs to work at least eight hours per week at the eligible institution and at least eight hours per week for the resident entrepreneur employer. The resident entrepreneur must have a designated workspace at the eligible institution, and he or she must work on assignments furthering the institution's research in areas such as life sciences, quantum computing, climate change, clean energy, entrepreneurship and innovation, or human rights and democracy. The eligible institution and the resident entrepreneur employer must each pay the resident entrepreneur a salary for his or her services at a market rate consistent with federal Department of Labor-published rates for similar services. Under the bill, to participate in the program, a resident entrepreneur employer must pay the eligible institution a fee equal to the amount the institution pays of his or her salary.

REPORTING REQUIREMENT

Beginning by December 31, 2024, DECD must annually report on the pilot program to the Commerce Committee. The report must include the following:

1. the progress in implementing the program,
2. recommendations for extending the program's duration or broadening its scope,
3. the number of participating resident entrepreneurs and resident entrepreneur employers,
4. the industries in which resident entrepreneurs are engaged, and
5. a cost-benefit analysis of the pilot program.

BACKGROUND

Specialty Occupations and H-1B Visas

To qualify for an H-1B visa, a nonimmigrant worker must have a bachelor’s degree or higher and be employed in a specialty occupation by a U.S.-based employer who will file the visa petition. (A specialty occupation is generally one that requires theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge and a bachelor’s or higher degree in the specific specialty (or its equivalent) to work in the occupation in the United States.)

The number of H-1B visas issued each fiscal year is capped at 65,000, but an additional 20,000 are available for people with a master’s degree or higher. From those who register for a visa, a lottery system selects who may apply. The application process occurs once a year, usually in early spring. This visa is generally valid for three years and can be extended for up to six years.

Higher education and nonprofit or governmental research institutions are not subject to the H-1B cap, and employees at a cap-exempt institution may apply for an H-1B visa anytime throughout the year.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Commerce Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 24 Nay 0 (03/22/2024)