

SEBAC 2024 RE-OPENER FAQ¹

Last Updated: March 5, 2024

Why is this a one-year agreement?	<i>In 2022, Coalition leaders and local negotiating committees worked together to win a fair four-year contract that delivered wage increases, steps and lump sums and helped to redress years of sacrifices state workers made to protect public services from underfunding and budget deficits. Those contracts were four year agreements in almost every unit, but the parties were unable to agree to wage increases and steps in the fourth year (2024-2025) and therefore this was left to a reopener.</i>
What is in the framework	<i>All units get a 2.5% general wage increase, plus a step (and a top step payment, for units who have those). For units that don't have steps, 2% in lieu of step is included in the agreement as per our historic practice.</i>
What happens next?	<i>A ratification vote will be scheduled for each bargaining unit. We are hopeful that all bargaining units will ratify this agreement which will allow us all to bring the ratified agreement to the General Assembly for approval before the end of Session in May.</i>
What influenced negotiations to reach this framework?	<i>Union negotiators sought higher raises, and the Lamont Administration lower. This compromise makes sense so that we can get reasonable increases this year responding to inflation and our state's recruitment and retention crisis in the short run, while we move on to work on the full contracts being open in 2025 as well as the pension and healthcare agreement being open in 2027. It is a small but important step in the process of providing fair wages and benefits for our members, and better public services for everyone.</i>
What happens if a bargaining unit doesn't ratify the tentative agreement?	<i>A bargaining unit that fails to ratify the tentative agreement would return to local negotiations and/or arbitration. Bargaining units who do approve the agreement would continue towards legislative approval previously mentioned.</i>
But isn't higher education facing a huge deficit? Does this framework worsen those financial states?	<i>This agreement includes an understanding that the general assembly would abide by its obligation to fund the costs of the agreement in block funded institutions like higher education.</i>
What about the fiscal guardrails?	<i>Our Coalition believes Governor Lamont's overly rigid interpretation of the fiscal guardrails continues to be a major obstacle for many current and future investment priorities for the people of Connecticut. However, the 24/25 budget already included money set aside to cover wage increases provided by the framework.</i>

¹ There are two units, UCHC-AAUP, and AFSCME P-8 (Program Supervisors), who reached 3 year rather than 4 year agreements in 2022. Employees in those units should reach out to their stewards/union leaders to see how this framework affects you.

What does this agreement do to address the short staffing concerns in many state agencies?	<i>At the heart of addressing the short staffing struggle is developing strong recruitment and retention efforts which encompasses fair wage and step increases. Beyond wages though, this framework also redirects the SEBAC transformation process to create a joint process for addressing recruitment and retention and short staffing, as well as related issues discouraging employees from taking and retaining jobs in state government. Meanwhile, we will continue to address short staffing issues through our legislative efforts with our allies in the 2024 short legislative session and more comprehensively in the longer legislative session in 2025. And of course, further bargaining can occur at local tables as we move towards bargaining the 2025 collective bargaining agreements which should begin this Fall.</i>
Higher education is facing lay-offs and major deficits, what does this framework do to address those?	<i>The higher education crisis is situated within the 2024 legislative session as a budget fight. While this framework provides assurances that these raises will not further exacerbate this funding crisis, SEBAC is committed to fighting for full permanent funding of our higher education system through legislative means.</i>