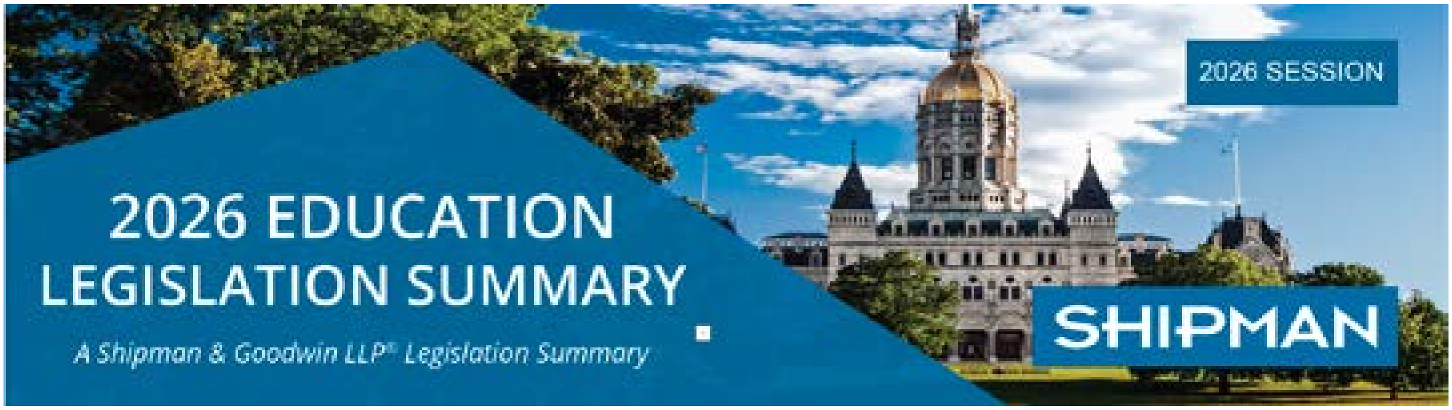

In its 2026 regular session, the General Assembly made a number of changes to the statutes that affect public education in Connecticut. This summary provides a brief overview of some of the more significant changes. ***Unless otherwise noted, these statutory changes are effective July 1, 2026 or upon passage****. Links to the new legislation are provided in the electronic version of this publication.*

STATUTORY CHANGES RELATED TO STUDENTS

Kindergarten Early Admission – Phase-Out of Waivers

Sections 26 and 27 of Public Act 26-1 change Connecticut's kindergarten entry rules and phase out early admission waivers in two stages. Since July 1, 2024, districts have been required to admit resident children who are five on or before September 1 of the school year. Districts also have been required to consider early admission for resident children younger than five upon written parent request and following an assessment of the child to ensure that admitting such child was developmentally appropriate. Effective July 1, 2026, the early admission process becomes discretionary: a child younger than five as of September 1 may be admitted only if the local or regional board of education has adopted an early admission policy that permits a child to be admitted upon written parent request and following an assessment by the principal and an appropriate certified staff member to determine whether admitting such child is developmentally appropriate. Therefore, for the 2026–2027 school year, boards should: (1) decide whether to adopt an early admission policy; (2) ensure any such policy meets statutory requirements; and (3) communicate the policy—or the decision not to adopt one—to families. Effective July 1, 2027, the law changes again, and the early admission process is repealed in its entirety. Therefore, for the 2027–2028 school year and beyond, all children must be five on or before September 1 of the school year to enroll in kindergarten, regardless of board policy. Boards must be mindful of the changing admission requirements and ensure applicable policies reflect these evolving standards.

Out-of-School Suspension for Preschool Through Grade 2 Students

Under existing law, suspensions from public school must be in-school suspensions, unless certain requirements are met. For students in preschool through grade two, boards of education may authorize the administration to impose an out-of-school suspension only where, after an informal disciplinary hearing, the administration finds that the student's conduct on school grounds caused physical harm. Section 40 of Public Act 26-1 narrows the circumstances in which out-of-school suspension is permitted for students in the younger grades. Under the revised law, an administrator may authorize out-of-school suspension for a student in preschool through grade two only if the student's conduct on school grounds caused "serious physical harm."

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Alternative Educational Opportunity for Twice-Expelled Students

Under existing law, boards of education must offer an alternative educational opportunity to 16- to 18-year-old students expelled for the first time who wish to continue their education. Section 41 of Public Act 26-1 expands this mandate by requiring boards to offer an alternative educational opportunity to 16- to 18-year-old students expelled for either the first or second time who wish to continue their education. Unchanged by the new law, a student may receive an alternative educational opportunity only if the student complies with the conditions established by the local or regional board of education.

Notification of Restraint and Seclusion

Existing law prohibits employees from using physical restraint or seclusion with a student except as an emergency intervention to prevent immediate or imminent injury to the student or others and requires boards of education to notify parents or guardians of such physical restraint or seclusion within twenty-four hours. Section 42 of Public Act 26-1 amends the timeline for notification and requires boards of education to notify parents or guardians the same day that a student is placed in a physical restraint or seclusion. As previously required, boards still must make a reasonable effort to notify parents or guardians immediately after the restraint or seclusion is initiated.

Vision Screening for Students

Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes § 10-214, each local and regional board of education must provide annual vision screenings for students in kindergarten, first grade, and third through fifth grade. Section 36 of Public Act 26-1 permits, but does not require, such vision screening for students in preschool and second grade.

Expanded Immunization Standards of Care

Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes § 19a-7f *et seq.*, the Commissioner of Public Health is responsible for determining the standard of care for immunization for Connecticut children. Public Act 26-3 makes various changes to the state's immunization laws, including establishing an immunization standard of care for adults in addition to children, expanding the types of immunizations that may be included in state immunization schedules to include passive immunizations (e.g., antibody treatments), and allowing the Connecticut Department of Public Health to purchase vaccines by means other than through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC"), among other revisions. The Act also removes reliance upon immunization schedules published by the CDC and adds a requirement that the state's standard of care for immunizations be based on schedules recommended by the Commissioner. Section 6 of the Act provides that local and regional boards of education, as well as the governing boards of nonpublic schools, must require immunizations included in the schedule for immunization recommended by the Commissioner, which, as stated above, need only take CDC recommendations into consideration rather than rely upon them.

Religious Freedom Restoration Act

Connecticut's Religious Freedom Restoration Act, codified at Connecticut General Statutes § 52-571b, prohibits the state or its political subdivisions from burdening a person's exercise of religion unless the government can demonstrate that the burden furthers a compelling governmental interest and is the least restrictive means of doing so. The statute also allows individuals to assert a violation as either a claim or a defense in judicial proceedings and obtain appropriate relief. Section 14 of Public Act 26-3 amends this statute to exclude the immunization requirements for public and private schools, including higher education institutions, from the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

Health Assessment Forms

Under existing law, each local and regional board of education must require students to have health assessments and screenings in accordance with statutory requirements, and the board may deny continued attendance in public school to any student who fails to obtain the required health assessments. The results of such assessments and screenings must be recorded on forms supplied by the State Board of Education ("SBE") and included in a student's cumulative health record. Section 39 of Public Act 26-1 makes two practical changes. First, it expressly authorizes school nurses to reject assessment or screening results submitted on forms other than the SBE-supplied form and to require resubmission on the correct form. Second, it requires that an asthma action plan be included with the assessment form for any student diagnosed with asthma.

Athletic Health Assessments for High School Student Athletes

Sections 15 and 16 of Public Act 26-13 amend Connecticut General Statutes § 10-206 and establish a new annual athletics health assessment requirement for public high school students who wish to participate in interscholastic athletics. For the school year commencing July 1, 2027, and each school year thereafter, each local or regional board of education must ensure that every student enrolled in grades nine through twelve undergoes an athletics health assessment before being permitted to participate in interscholastic athletics for each academic year. The assessment must be conducted by a qualified health care provider and include a physical examination with cardiac screening designed to detect conditions that could lead to sudden cardiac death.

All athletics health assessments must be recorded on a form supplied by the SBE, which form must include specific statutory elements identifying that certain screenings and assessments have been conducted. Consistent with existing student health assessment requirements, the Act requires boards of education to provide the athletics health assessment without charge to all students whose parents or guardians meet the eligibility requirements for free and reduced-price meals. The assessment results must also be included in the cumulative health record of each student.

Academic Standards for Interscholastic Athletics

The Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference ("CIAC") has long governed public school interscholastic athletic play in Connecticut, which governance has included establishing minimum academic requirements for participating athletes in grades nine through twelve. Section 3 of Public Act 26-139 provides that, beginning July 1, 2027, local and regional boards of education may not require participating students to meet or exceed academic standards that are higher than those established by the CIAC. Accordingly, districts may not impose stricter academic requirements for athletic participation than those set by the CIAC.

Student School Safety Plans Developed by Health Care Providers

Sections 19 through 22 of Public Act 26-13 set requirements for health care providers to share certain minor patients' mental health "safety plans" with schools and for boards of education to facilitate receipt of those plans through a secure messaging system. Under the Act, a "safety plan" is defined as a "written document created collaboratively between a health care provider and a patient outlining coping strategies, activities, and support networks the patient can access to prevent or manage a potential mental health crisis."

Beginning April 1, 2027, each health care provider that prepares a safety plan for a minor patient who received inpatient behavioral health care treatment for a period of at least twelve consecutive days must (1) review the safety plan with the minor patient, if medically appropriate, and (2) inquire whether the minor patient or the patient's parent or legally authorized representative consents to sharing the safety plan with the patient's school.

If consent is given, the provider must obtain written consent from the patient or the patient's parent, as appropriate, and transmit the safety plan to the patient's school district or school using a secure messaging system or in a form and manner that complies with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996.

By January 1, 2027, each local or regional board of education must (1) sign up for a secure messaging system account and (2) provide account access to one or more designated employees (school nurses, nurse supervisors, nurse practitioners, counselors, social workers, or psychologists) to receive safety plans. At least one designated employee must be a school nurse supervisor. Designated employees must retain safety plans in a confidential file separate from cumulative academic or health records, though plan information may be used for Individualized Education Program ("IEP") or Section 504 plan interventions. By April 1, 2027, each board must submit its secure messaging system address to the Commissioner of Education.

Beginning July 1, 2027, and each school year thereafter, boards of education must provide guidance on these requirements to all new designated employees. The Act directs the State Department of Education ("SDE") to develop and make available guidance and training materials, which shall include instructions for using the secure messaging system.

The Act also amends the goals of the Statewide Health Information Exchange ("Connie") to include providing, within available appropriations, a secure messaging system organizational account to each school district or school, as determined by each board of education, for the purpose of receiving safety plans, and providing designated employees with access to those accounts at no cost to the school district, school, or designated employee.

Eating Disorder Screening Tool to be Used by School-Based Health Centers

In accordance with Section 4 of Public Act 26-62, beginning January 1, 2027, each school-based health center ("SBHC") must (1) adopt an evidence-based screening tool designed to detect early signs of disordered eating behaviors, to be used alongside—not in place of—the diagnostic methods the SBHC already employs, and (2) administer that screening tool to every student in grades six through twelve as part of the student's annual health check-up, including the routine health assessments conducted under Connecticut General Statutes § 10-206.

Administration of Opioid Antagonists

Public Act 26-38 amends Connecticut General Statutes § 10-212a, which concerns the administration of medication in schools, and expands the permissible use of opioid antagonists, such as Naloxone, to treat overdoses. These revisions reflect the reclassification by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration of certain opioid antagonists from prescription-only ("legend") to over-the-counter ("nonlegend"). All nonlegend versions of opioid antagonists come in the form of a nasal spray, rather than an injectable.

Under current law, only a school nurse or, in their absence, a qualified school employee who has completed a training program, may administer opioid antagonists to students without prior written authorization. Section 1 of the Act clarifies that a qualified school employee may administer a *legend* opioid antagonist whether or not a school nurse is available on-site. Previously, a qualified employee could administer only in the nurse's absence. Importantly, the Act also eliminates the option for parents or guardians to opt their child out of receiving an opioid antagonist in an emergency.

The Act further provides that "any person" may administer a *nonlegend* opioid antagonist to "any person" and adds that nothing in the law concerning opioid administration in schools should be construed to prevent school nurses, qualified school employees, or any other person in a school setting from administering a nonlegend opioid antagonist to anyone experiencing an opioid overdose at school. In accordance with changes imposed by Public Act 26-68, described further below, such persons are immune from civil liability for ordinary negligence arising from administration of a nonlegend opioid antagonist, but not for gross, willful, or wanton negligence. The SDE must establish guidelines for the storage and administration of nonlegend opioid antagonists in schools.

Importantly, the law continues to require any administration of a *legend* opioid antagonist be done only by a trained school nurse or qualified school employee and in compliance with the policies and procedures of the board of education.

Existing law provides immunity from civil and criminal penalties for a person who administers an opioid antagonist (e.g., Naloxone) to another individual, as long as the person administering the opioid antagonist has a good faith belief that the individual is experiencing an opioid-related overdose. Section 165 of Public Act 26-68 expands that immunity to any person administering an over-the-counter (nonlegend) opioid antagonist. This section of the Act also provides that a pharmacy permit is not required to distribute over-the-counter opioid antagonists, as long as such distribution is without consideration or compensation.

Education of Homeless Children and Youth

Under Connecticut General Statutes § 10-253, boards of education are required to provide educational services to homeless children and youth in accordance with the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as amended from time to time. Effective October 1, 2026, Public Act 26-125 amends Connecticut law to specify that the educational services must be provided in accordance with the version of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in effect December 23, 2022.

STATUTORY CHANGES RELATED TO SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IN PUBLIC SCHOOL, NONPUBLIC SCHOOL, OR THROUGH PARENT-MANAGED LEARNING

Parent-Managed Learning (i.e., Homeschooling)

Public Act 26-37 concerns the provision of parent-managed learning (i.e., homeschooling) in Connecticut. Under current law, parents or guardians ("parents") of children aged five to under eighteen are required to send their children to public school or demonstrate they are receiving equivalent instruction elsewhere, with limited exceptions. Effective July 1, 2027, the Act modifies the compulsory school attendance law by requiring parents to (1) enroll their children in public school, (2) have their children attend a nonpublic school, or (3) be instructed through "parent-managed learning," defined as the "provision of education that is managed by a parent or guardian of a child in a setting other than a public or nonpublic school."

The new law does not change a parent's obligation to instruct, or cause their children to be instructed, in reading, writing, spelling, English grammar, geography, arithmetic, and United States history and citizenship, including a study of town, state, and federal governments.

Intent to Educate Form

Beginning with the 2028–2029 school year, Section 1 of Public Act 26-37 requires parents of most school-age children to annually complete an "intent to educate" form indicating whether their child will be enrolled in public school, attend a nonpublic school, or be instructed through parent-managed learning for the school year.

- The Act specifies that the requirement to complete the intent to educate form applies to parents of children (1) enrolled in public school, (2) attending nonpublic school, (3) being instructed through parent-managed learning (if newly eligible for kindergarten or if an intent to educate form or withdrawal form was submitted the prior year), or (4) for whom an option form (described further below) was signed.
- If the child will be attending a nonpublic school, the parent must provide evidence that such child will be attending the nonpublic school.
- Parents are deemed in compliance with the requirement to submit an intent to educate form if their child attends public school or if the nonpublic school their child attends files an annual student attendance report to the Commissioner of Education.

- The intent to educate form must be submitted to the school district office for the town where the parents reside by October 1 and may be submitted electronically.

- Parents who move to a different school district during the school year must complete the intent to educate form within 14 days after moving into such school district.

- Parents who withdraw their child from a nonpublic school during the school year must complete an updated intent to educate form.

- Under the Act, as under current law, parents may still exercise the option of not sending their child to school until the child is seven years old by personally appearing at the school district office for the town in which such parent or guardian resides and signing an option form.

Additionally, starting with the 2028-2029 school year, if by November 1, a board of education does not receive an intent to educate form from a parent who is not otherwise deemed in compliance, but whose child is (1) enrolled in public school, (2) attending nonpublic school, (3) being instructed through parent-managed learning (if newly eligible for kindergarten or if an intent to educate form or withdrawal form was submitted the prior year), or (4) for whom an option form was signed the prior school year, the board must make at least three attempts to contact the parent to inform such parent that they are required to complete an intent to educate form for the current school year. If the board is unable to make contact with the parent by November 1, the board must notify the SDE.

Section 2 of the Act requires the SDE to develop the intent to educate form and withdrawal form (discussed below) by July 1, 2027, and make them available to boards of education.

Withdrawals from Public School

Section 1 of Public Act 26-37 establishes student withdrawal procedures. As under current law, parents who withdraw a child from public school (or 18-year-old students who opt to withdraw) must personally appear at the school district office and sign a withdrawal form.

In addition, starting with the 2027-2028 school year, the following requirements must be met.

- If a parent withdraws their child from public school to attend a nonpublic school, the parent must provide evidence that the child will attend a nonpublic school, and the withdrawal is complete upon receipt of that evidence.

- If a parent withdraws their child from public school to instead provide for parent-managed learning, the withdrawal will not be effective until the Superintendent of Schools or the Superintendent's designee ("Superintendent") conducts a records check with the Department of Children and Families ("DCF"). The Act requires the Superintendent, within two business days of receiving a withdrawal form indicating an intent that the child be instructed through parent-managed learning, to check DCF records concerning every person aged 18 or older residing with the child.

- If the records check reveals that any adult (age 18+) in the household is (1) listed on the state child abuse and neglect registry, or (2) currently under DCF investigation for alleged child abuse or neglect, the withdrawal will not be effective and the child may not be withdrawn for parent-managed learning. The Superintendent must notify the parent within five business days of commencing the records check whether the withdrawal is effective. If the withdrawal is not effective, the Superintendent must provide the reason and information on how to challenge the findings, including the appropriate contact information for DCF.

- The Act specifies that this records check does not constitute a report of suspected child abuse or neglect. Section 1 of the Act also deems DCF a state educational authority under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act for purposes of this records check, allowing it to receive the education records of any child for whom a withdrawal form (intending for the child to be instructed through parent-managed learning) is signed.

- Section 5 of the Act authorizes DCF to disclose records to the board of education, without consent of the person who is the subject of the records, for purposes of conducting this check.

Reporting Requirement in Statewide Public School Information System

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-10a establishes a Public School Information System ("PSIS") for collecting and reporting various student, teacher, and school-related data. Effective July 1, 2027, Section 4 of Public Act 26-37 expands these reporting obligations to include the number of children being instructed through parent-managed learning for whom an intent to educate form was completed or a withdrawal form was signed.

STATUTORY CHANGES RELATED TO CURRICULUM

Connecticut State Seal of Civics Education and Engagement

Sections 20 and 21 of Public Act 26-1 establish the Connecticut State Seal of Civics Education and Engagement (the "Seal"). Commencing with the class of 2027, local and regional boards of education, or the governing board of any other school that awards diplomas, may affix the Seal to a diploma awarded to a student who has achieved a high level of proficiency in civics education and engagement. The board must also indicate on the student's transcript that the student received the Seal.

The Act directs the SDE to establish criteria for awarding the Seal, which shall include, but not be limited to, (1) successful completion of history or social science courses for at least two years, one of which must be a U.S. government or civics course; (2) participation in at least one civic engagement project, such as community service, student government, an internship with an elected official, or involvement in a civic organization; and (3) demonstrated proficiency in civics knowledge through a standardized assessment, portfolio of work that includes essays, projects, or presentations related to civics, or other mastery-based assessment or process.

Changes to Required and Recommended Curriculum

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-16b outlines the required courses of study in public schools, as well as courses that public schools are encouraged to offer. Beginning with the 2026-2027 school year, Section 34 of Public Act 26-15 adds computer science, including but not limited to artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, to the list of required courses, adding to "computer programming," which had already been required by the statute.

In addition, Section 24 of Public Act 26-1 adds Islamic and Arab studies to the list of curricular topics for which the SBE shall (1) make curriculum materials available, within available appropriations, and (2) encourage instruction.

Mathematics Pathways, Instruction, and Specialist Guidance

Section 10 of Public Act 26-139 requires the Commissioner of Education, by January 1, 2027, to redesign Connecticut's high school mathematics pathways to prepare students for postsecondary careers. The pathways must include, at minimum, (1) science, technology, engineering and mathematics; (2) data science and statistics; (3) quantitative reasoning; and (4) workforce and applied mathematics. The Commissioner must also create a list of professional development providers to support the implementation of high-quality math instruction and explore the feasibility of launching "MathConn," a professional learning series for educators. Finally, in consultation with the Connecticut Educator Preparation and Certification Board, the Commissioner must develop guidelines for mathematics specialists in supporting math interventions.

Broad Assessment Reduction Incentive Program

Section 7 of Public Act 26-139 directs the Commissioner of Education to establish, by July 1, 2027, an incentive program for school districts that (1) reduces or limits the time students spend taking broad assessments, (2) integrates state-provided interim and formative assessment tools into local curriculum, and (3) increases teacher competency in the formative assessment process. A "broad assessment" is one that measures what students should have learned during a semester or school year, excluding statewide mastery examinations and other assessments required by state or federal law. The incentives offered under this program may include public recognition, financial awards, and enhanced autonomy or operational flexibility.

Guidance on Reducing Discretionary Local Student Assessment

Section 8 of Public Act 26-139 requires the SDE, by June 1, 2027, to develop and provide guidance to boards of education on "effective strategies for reducing the amount of discretionary local student assessments." Such guidance may include eliminating fall and spring broad assessments, as defined above, or substituting certain end-of-unit summative assessments with state-provided interim and formative assessment tools.

Guidance on Reading Intervention and Assessments

Section 1 of Public Act 26-149 requires the SDE to develop and disseminate guidance to local and regional boards of education regarding the implementation of multitiered systems of support or response to intervention frameworks for students who are identified as struggling in reading. While this statute is effective July 1, 2026, the Act does not include a date by when the guidance must be disseminated to boards. No later than January 1, 2028, the Commissioner of Education must submit to the General Assembly a report on the guidance developed and any recommendations for legislation.

SDE Study of Co-Instruction Teaching Models

Section 29 of Public Act 26-12 creates a working group to study the effectiveness and benefits of co-instruction teaching models used by public schools, including models that allow individuals without a professional certification to teach collaboratively with a certified teacher. The working group shall report the results of such study to the General Assembly no later than January 1, 2027.

STATUTORY CHANGES RELATED TO SCHOOL SECURITY AND SAFETY

School Resource Officer – Memorandum of Understanding

Under existing law, a board of education that assigns a School Resource Officer ("SRO") to its school(s) must enter into a Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") with a local law enforcement agency that meets certain statutory requirements. Section 34 of Public Act 26-1 now requires that each SRO MOU be updated at least every three years. Existing law further provides that such MOU must, among other requirements, (1) be maintained in a central location in the school district and posted on the school district's website and on the website of each school in which an SRO is assigned, (2) include provisions addressing daily interactions between students and school personnel with school resource officers, and (3) include a graduated response model for student discipline. The Act requires that these three elements be implemented no later than January 1, 2027.

Armed Security Guards

Under existing law, local and regional boards of education may employ or enter into an agreement with a sworn member of a police department or a retired police officer to provide security and possess a firearm on school grounds.

Section 1 of Public Act 26-139 amends the law by replacing "retired police officer" with "retired officer," and adds that a "retired officer" may also be a retired "parole officer" who meets certain requirements under federal law. The Act further revises the definition of "retired officer" to clarify that, in addition to having retired or separated from a law enforcement unit in good standing and other requirements, such individual cannot have (1) been dismissed from employment as a peace officer for malfeasance or other serious misconduct calling into question the individual's fitness to serve as a peace officer or (2) resigned or retired during an investigation into such conduct. The Act further defines "good standing" to mean that eligible police officers or parole officers cannot have been terminated as a result of disciplinary action or during a period when such police officer or parole officer was under investigation or disciplinary action was pending.

Crisis Response Drills

Under existing law, boards of education must develop and conduct a crisis response drill, in lieu of a fire drill, once every three months. Sections 44 through 47 of Public Act 26-1 establish new protocols and requirements that must be followed when conducting a crisis response drill.

The Act directs the Connecticut Center for School Safety and Crisis Prevention ("Center"), by April 1, 2027 and in collaboration with the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection ("DESPP"), to develop (1) a clear definition for crisis response drills; (2) standardized terminology for the administration and review of crisis response drills; (3) guidance on standardized responses to crises and standardized debriefing protocols following a crisis; and (4) an evaluation template for crisis response drills that allows school districts to use feedback from participants to assess the efficacy of such drills and make appropriate adjustments. The Center and DESPP must also conduct a study on the impact of crisis response drills on the school community and submit to the General Assembly a report and recommendations regarding the same.

Beginning with the 2027-2028 school year, crisis response drills must be trauma-informed, designed to prevent emotional harm, and support the psychological safety of students and school personnel, with mental health professionals' participation integrated throughout the crisis response drill. Schools must provide age-appropriate education for students, training for school personnel, and one week's advance notice to students, staff, parents, and guardians before conducting a drill. Schools must also clearly communicate the nature and purpose of the drills to parents and guardians and, at the commencement of any such drill, students and school personnel must be informed that they are participating in a crisis response drill in order to avoid confusion when an actual emergency situation occurs. In addition, accommodations must be provided, to the extent practicable, for students with cognitive, physical, or sensory disabilities.

Significantly, drills involving students may not include active assailant simulations or simulated violence with highly sensorial elements such as fake assailants, firearms, gunfire sounds, blood, or injuries. These elements may, however, be included in drills conducted exclusively for school personnel, first responders, and volunteers outside the regular school day.

Each drill must utilize the definitions and terminology, reflect the guidance, and be evaluated using the evaluation template developed by the Center in consultation with DESPP. In addition, the school security and safety committee, already required by law, must collaborate with the school climate committee to plan crisis response drills that prioritize the physical and psychological safety of students and school personnel.

As under existing law, the requirement that each board of education annually submit its school security and safety plan(s) to DESPP remains in effect, but boards now must make available to members of the school community, upon request, the parts of such plans that are not prohibited from disclosure under the Connecticut Freedom of Information Act.

School Mapping Data Services

Public Act 26-116 creates a program, through the DESPP, to provide grants to municipalities and municipal police departments (collectively referred to herein as "municipalities"), within available appropriations, to provide school mapping data. Any municipality may apply for a grant for services to provide school mapping data, as long as such school mapping data meets eleven statutory requirements, including compatibility with software used by public safety agencies without requiring additional purchases; accuracy verified through a physical walk-through of school buildings and grounds; inclusion of floor plans overlaid on aerial imagery; site-specific labels matching room numbers, hallway names, door numbers, hazard locations, automatic external defibrillator and trauma kit locations; and gridded coordinate overlays. By October 1, 2026, DESPP must develop and post on its website eligibility criteria, application forms, and deadlines for the grant program.

Taking an Individual into Custody in State or Municipal Facilities or Protected Areas

Section 7 of Public Act 26-14 prohibits peace officers from detaining, arresting, or otherwise taking an individual into custody on the basis of a "civil offense" in a state facility, municipal facility, or protected area, including a school, unless (1) the peace officer is acting in their official capacity and (2) the individual is the subject of a judicial warrant. The Act's protections extend not only to school buildings but also to the grounds and any garages or parking areas, regardless of whether they are contiguous to the school building. "Peace officer" is defined by the Act as, among other individuals, any federal law enforcement officer.

For purposes of this Act, a "civil offense" is an offense for which a local, state, or federal civil proceeding is available to the charged individual to offer a defense. The term does not include any infraction identified by the general statutes, a motor vehicle violation, or an arrest that is allowed for an alleged violation of criminal law carrying a possible term of imprisonment. As a practical matter, this definition is broadly understood to address, among other things, enforcement actions that rely on civil, rather than criminal, authority.

STATUTORY CHANGES RELATED TO EMPLOYMENT (SPECIFIC TO SCHOOL-EMPLOYEES)

Teacher Terminations

Section 8 of Public Act 26-12 amends Connecticut General Statutes § 10-151 to make significant changes to the hearing and appeal process for tenured teachers, generally shifting decision-making authority away from boards of education.

Reasons for Termination and Standard of Review. The Teacher Tenure Act has long provided six reasons for which a tenured teacher can be terminated: (1) inefficiency, incompetence, or ineffectiveness; (2) insubordination; (3) moral misconduct; (4) disability, as shown by competent medical evidence; (5) elimination of a position or loss of a position to another teacher; or (6) other due and sufficient cause. The Act changes the sixth permissible reason for terminating a tenured teacher's contract from "due and sufficient cause" to "due and sufficient reasons." In addition, the Act establishes for the first time a standard of review for termination proceedings: the same standard applied in other disciplinary actions under the terms of the teachers' collective bargaining agreement.

Hearing and Decision Process. Under prior law, a tenured teacher who had been notified that the termination of their contract was under consideration could request a hearing before either the board of education, which could conduct the hearing as a whole or appoint a subcommittee of the board, or an impartial hearing officer. The Act eliminates the option for the board or board subcommittee hearing. Now, all termination hearings must be conducted by an impartial hearing officer selected by the teacher and the superintendent, or, if the parties cannot agree on a hearing officer, through the American Arbitration Association's expedited process.

Significantly, the hearing officer's decision will now be binding on the parties. Under prior law, the board subcommittee or hearing officer submitted written findings and a recommendation to the board for final disposition. Under the revised law, the hearing officer will instead render a written disposition that is binding on the parties, without submission to or participation by the board.

Appeal Rights. Under prior law, a tenured teacher who was aggrieved by the board's decision to terminate employment could appeal to the Superior Court. Under the then-applicable standard of review, the court was generally required to affirm the decision unless it found that the underlying decision violated constitutional or statutory provisions, exceeded statutory authority, was made using an unlawful procedure, was affected by another error of law, was clearly erroneous, or was arbitrary or capricious.

Now, either a tenured teacher or a board of education that is aggrieved by the hearing officer's decision may file an application with the Superior Court to confirm, vacate, or modify the decision pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §§ 52-417 to 52-419. The aggrieved party must file a copy of the hearing transcript and any other documents constituting the record of the appeal. The court will apply the statutory standard for appeals of arbitration awards, which require it to confirm an award unless it is necessary to vacate or modify it due to limited reasons, including corruption or certain misconduct of the arbitrator/hearing officer.

Termination of Non-Tenured Teachers. Under current law, teachers who have not yet attained tenure generally enjoy fewer procedural rights in the event their employer seeks to nonrenew or terminate their contract. The Act does not change the process for terminating non-tenured teachers, who retain the right to a hearing before the board of education or, if designated by the board, before a subcommittee of the board or an impartial hearing officer chosen by the teacher and the superintendent, which subcommittee or hearing officer shall submit written findings and recommendations to the board for final disposition.

Public School Teacher Payroll Deduction of Union Dues

In *Janus v. AFSCME, Council 31*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that requiring public employees to pay an agency fee to the union violates the First Amendment. Since *Janus*, agency fees and any other payments to the union can only be deducted from a nonmember's wages upon an employee's affirmative consent. Section 13 of Public Act 26-12 conforms Connecticut General Statutes § 10-153a, which governs collective bargaining for public school teachers and administrators, to federal law, which generally prohibits public sector contracts from requiring employees, who are covered by a collective bargaining agreement but do not pay union dues, from paying service fees without the employee's express consent. The revised law specifies that the parties may negotiate provisions allowing for employees to elect to have payroll deductions for dues, initiation fees, and service fees.

"Reasonable Assurance" of Returning to Work for Paraeducators

Section 51 of Public Act 26-12 establishes new requirements for local and regional boards of education, regional educational service centers, governing authorities for state charter schools, and endowed or incorporated academies approved by the SBE (referred to in this section as "school districts") regarding the reporting of paraeducator employment status to the Department of Labor ("DOL") in connection with unemployment benefit eligibility during school breaks. Under existing law, employees who work at an educational institution are generally ineligible to receive unemployment benefits for a school break—such as between two successive academic years, between two regular terms, or during a customary vacation or holiday recess—if they have a "reasonable assurance" of returning to work for any educational institution once courses resume.

The Act codifies the definition of "reasonable assurance" for these purposes. Reasonable assurance exists when two conditions are met. First, there must be an offer of employment for the following school year that (a) was made by an authorized employee of the school district, (b) is for services in the same capacity as the individual performed in the prior school year, (c) provides wages or salary in an amount not less than 90% of the total amount paid to the individual by every educational institution for which the individual worked during the prior school year, and (d) is not contingent on factors within the school district's control, such as course programming, available funding allocation, program modifications, or facility availability. Second, it must be highly probable based on the totality of the circumstances that the paraeducator will provide services in the same capacity once courses resume in the following school year.

The Act requires each school district to submit two lists to the DOL, in the form and manner prescribed by the Commissioner, at least ten days before the last day of regular school sessions. The first list must identify each individual, by name and Social Security number, who was employed as a paraeducator and does not have a reasonable assurance of returning. The second list must identify each paraeducator who does have a reasonable assurance of returning in the same capacity, along with a description of the manner in which such reasonable assurance was provided, including whether the offer was made in writing, orally, or implied; the nature of any contingencies in the offer; and information about the offer that was communicated to the individual.

The Act further specifies that the Labor Commissioner may consider information provided on these lists when making reasonable assurance determinations for unemployment benefit purposes, but such information shall not constitute conclusive evidence of reasonable assurance in any case.

Paraeducator Health Care Subsidy

Section 6 of Public Act 26-149 expands the paraeducator health benefit subsidy programs that were established in 2023, revised in 2024, and expired on June 30, 2025. Specifically, the Act makes permanent two programs beginning with the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027: (1) a program that provides a subsidy to each paraeducator who opens a health savings account or is eligible for Medicare and enrolls in a high deductible health plan, in an amount up to a percentage of the plan deductible minus employer contributions, and subject to limits imposed by the state Comptroller; and (2) a program that provides a subsidy to boards of education that provide a health benefit plan or partnership plan coverage to paraeducators, subject to certain statutory amounts and requirements. Notably, the Act also broadens eligibility from paraeducators employed "by a local or regional board of education" to those employed "in a public school," and explicitly extends the provisions to charter schools. Section 7 of the Act directs the Comptroller to calculate the cost of expanding the subsidy program to include paraeducators employed by charter schools.

Enhanced Workers' Compensation Benefits for Employees Assaulted at Work

Under current law, Connecticut General Statutes § 10-236a provides that any board of education employee who is absent from work as a result of an injury sustained during an assault, or for a related court appearance, shall continue to receive the employee's full salary, less any workers' compensation benefits. In addition, if such employee, or a board member, is assaulted while performing their duties and suffers a financial loss or expense, the board of education generally must cover such losses and expenses that were not covered by insurance, workers' compensation benefits, or another source. Effective October 1, 2026, Section 75 of Public Act 26-12 repeals this law, and Section 1 of the Act replaces these benefits with enhanced workers' compensation benefits for board of education employees and members who suffer compensable total or partial incapacity as a result of a "physical or negligent assault" in the discharge of their duties. Under the new law, such employees will receive workers' compensation benefits equal to 100% of their average weekly earnings at the date of injury, calculated using the same process that applies to other workers' compensation claims, plus their reasonable expenses resulting from the assault and any wages lost due to related court appearances. In addition, the law provides that any such board member or employee shall continue to receive their full salary during such period of absence, except that the workers' compensation may be deducted from salary payments during the absence. The new law further provides that the time of such absence shall not be charged against an employee's sick leave, vacation time, or personal leave days. The Act does not define or specify the applicable legal standard for "assault."

Private Sector Educator Externships

Section 26 of Public Act 26-12 directs the Commissioner of Education to create, in consultation with the Office of Workforce Strategy, a two-year pilot program to provide educator externships for certified educators to participate in experiential learning with private sector employers to align classroom instruction with current industry standards and workforce needs. The Act requires the Commissioner to include several specific elements within the pilot program, which must be created no later than January 1, 2028.

For the 2028-2029 and 2029-2030 school years, the Commissioner shall prioritize placement in such externship programs to educators in alliance districts or educators who teach a topic related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics, manufacturing or health care.

Repeal of Code of Professional Responsibility for Teachers

In our 2024 Education Legislation Summary, we explained that Section 51 of Public Act 24-41 repealed a number of regulations related to educator preparation programs and certifications, including Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies § 10-145d-400a(a)-(d), the Code of Professional Responsibility for Teachers, effective July 1, 2026. Section 6 of Public Act 26-139 delays implementation of that repeal to July 1, 2027.

Misconduct-Related Information Disclosure During Prospective School Employee Hiring Process

Sections 11 through 13 of Public Act 26-139 revise the existing framework that a board of education, charter school governing council, magnet school operator, or supervisory agent of nonpublic schools (collectively, "school governing entities") must follow when hiring applicants for positions involving direct student contact. The law requires school governing entities to, among other things, review a written statement from the applicant, contact the applicant's former employers (as defined by the statute), and review information from the SDE regarding the SDE's knowledge of the applicant's history of certain misconduct. The Act generally expands the scope of what applicants, former employers, and the SDE must disclose.

Expanded applicant disclosure requirements. Section 11 of the Act expands the scope of information an applicant for a position involving direct student contact must disclose during the hiring process. In addition to existing requirements, such applicant now must be required to disclose the following:

- if the applicant has been or is currently under investigation for abuse, neglect, or sexual misconduct. The exception that allowed applicants to avoid disclosing investigations in which all allegations were unsubstantiated has been eliminated, and applicants must now disclose all investigations regardless of outcome;

- if the applicant has been or is the subject of any investigation involving the injury or risk of injury to, or impairing the morals of, a minor (hereinafter referred to as "injury to a minor");

- whether the applicant has ever been disciplined, asked to resign, resigned or otherwise separated from employment while an allegation of abuse, neglect, sexual misconduct and now injury to a minor was pending or under investigation not only by DCF, but also by an employer, state agency, or municipal police department; and

- whether the applicant has ever had a professional or occupational license or certificate suspended or revoked while an allegation of abuse, neglect, sexual misconduct and now injury to a minor was pending or under investigation.

Employment history review. Currently, school governing entities must also conduct an employment history review of applicants for positions involving direct student contact that meets certain requirements. The Act expands the information to be collected from certain employers to include a statement regarding whether the employer has knowledge that the applicant (1) was, or is, subject to an allegation of abuse, neglect, or sexual misconduct for which there is an investigation pending or which has been substantiated, unless such substantiation has been reversed; and (2) was disciplined or asked to resign from employment or resigned from or otherwise separated from any employment while an allegation of abuse or neglect or sexual misconduct was, or is, pending or under investigation, or due to a substantiation of abuse or neglect or sexual misconduct, unless such substantiation has been reversed. The Act further explicitly authorizes employers from whom such information is requested to disclose such information.

Information sharing with the SDE. Under existing law, school governing entities must notify the SDE when an applicant or employee has been disciplined because of a finding of abuse, neglect, or sexual misconduct. The Act now requires that they also notify the SDE of applicants who are currently under investigation for such conduct. Similarly, the Act now requires school governing entities to seek, among other things, information from the SDE regarding whether the SDE has knowledge of and any information concerning not only substantiated findings of abuse, neglect, or sexual misconduct, but also of any pending investigations, during the background check process.

Applicability to employees of contractors. The foregoing enhanced requirements will also be applied to employees of contractors who will have direct student contact.

Contract and agreement restrictions. Currently, collective bargaining agreements, employment contracts, and other agreements cannot require a school governing entity to expunge information about an allegation or finding of abuse, neglect, or sexual misconduct from any documents it maintains unless, after an investigation, the allegation is dismissed or found false. The exception for dismissed allegations has been eliminated, allowing expungement only when an allegation is found to be false.

Requests for information from the SBE. Existing law requires the SBE, upon request of an eligible school operator, to make available any information concerning the applicant's eligibility for employment in a position requiring a certificate, authorization or permit; known discipline and findings of abuse, neglect or sexual misconduct; and known criminal history (including whether criminal charges are pending). Section 12 of the Act adds a fourth category of information that the SBE must disclose upon request to eligible school operators: whether the SDE has been notified that an applicant "is under investigation or has been disciplined for a finding of abuse or neglect or sexual misconduct by a former employer," unless the investigation resulted in a finding that "all allegations were false." Section 13 mirrors Section 12, but applies specifically to nongovernmental school operators (e.g., independent schools).

STATUTORY CHANGES RELATED TO EMPLOYMENT (GENERAL)

Electronic Monitoring of Employees

Public Act 26-73 amends Connecticut General Statutes § 31-48d to strengthen the requirements governing employer electronic monitoring of employees in the workplace.

Prior written notice. The Act continues to require that each employer who engages in any type of electronic monitoring provide prior written notice to all employees who may be affected. The notice must inform employees of the types of monitoring that may occur. Effective October 1, 2026, such notice must also identify the specific locations on the employer's premises where such monitoring may take place. In addition to posting the notice in a conspicuous place readily available for viewing by employees, such notice must also be posted in the specific locations on the premises where monitoring may occur.

New requirement for newly hired employees. The Act introduces a new obligation requiring each employer who engages in electronic monitoring to provide each employee hired on or after October 1, 2026, with a written plain language statement advising the employee of which activities are prohibited and may be monitored without prior written notice, as described in the misconduct-based monitoring exception. The written statement must be provided before the employee commences employment.

Exceptions to the notice requirement. There are two categories of exceptions to the notice requirement. First, consistent with existing law, an employer may conduct electronic monitoring without giving prior written notice when the employer has reasonable grounds to believe that (1) employees are engaged in conduct that violates the law, violates the legal rights of the employer or the employer's employees, or creates a hostile workplace environment, and (2) electronic monitoring may produce evidence of this misconduct. Second, the Act adds a new exception providing that the requirement to disclose the specific location where electronic monitoring may occur does not apply when an employer has reasonable grounds to conduct monitoring for security and employee safety purposes. Notably, this exception relieves the employer only of the obligation to disclose the specific monitoring location; the employer must still provide general notice that monitoring may occur and identify the types of monitoring used.

Americans with Disabilities Act Information

Sections 30 and 31 of Public Act 26-12 create new requirements related to the dissemination of information about the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 ("ADA") and reasonable accommodations in the workplace.

Section 30 of the Act requires the Labor Commissioner to post information about the ADA on the DOL's website.

Section 31 imposes a corresponding obligation on employers. Specifically, employers must provide written notice of an employee's right to reasonable accommodations in the workplace for a disability under the ADA to (1) new employees at the commencement of employment, (2) existing employees within 120 days of October 1, 2026 (i.e., by January 29, 2027), and (3) any employee who notifies the employer of a disability within ten days of such notification. An employer may alternatively comply with these notice requirements by displaying the poster created by the Labor Commissioner in a conspicuous place accessible to employees.

Breastfeeding and Expressing Milk in the Workplace

Section 32 of Public Act 26-12 amends Connecticut General Statutes § 31-40w to strengthen workplace protections for employees who need to express breast milk or breastfeed. Under prior law, an employee could, at the employee's discretion, express breast milk or breastfeed at the workplace during meal or break periods. The revised law makes two significant changes. First, an employer is now required to provide reasonable breaks for an employee to express breast milk for their nursing child or breastfeed on site at the employee's workplace. Second, these reasonable break times must be provided "in addition to" an employee's scheduled breaks, rather than only during meal or break periods. These changes to state law reflect similar, and already existing, requirements under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act.

Pre- and Post-Shift Hours

Under existing law, an employee's "hours worked" for overtime purposes includes all time during which an employee is required by the employer to be on the employer's premises or to be on duty and all time during which an employee is employed or permitted to work, whether or not required to do so. "Hours worked" also includes time when an employee is required to wait on the premises while no work is provided by the employer. Section 201 of Public Act 26-68 clarifies the scope of an employee's "hours worked" and specifies that it also includes time the employee spends in security screenings required by the employer. This revision codifies the Connecticut Supreme Court's February 2026 decision in *Del Rio et al. v. Amazon.com Services, Inc.*

Disclosure of Wage Ranges and Benefits

Under existing law, Connecticut General Statutes § 31-40z requires certain wage transparency disclosures in connection with job postings, employment offers, and employee requests. Effective October 1, 2026, Section 2 of Public Act 26-12 amends the wage transparency statute to require employers to include, in addition to the position's wage range, a general description of the position's benefits. For internal or public job advertisements, an employer must disclose the position's wage or wage range and a general description of the position's benefits in such advertisement. For positions that have not been posted this way, the employer must provide to an applicant the position's wage range and a general description of the position's benefits upon the earlier of (1) the applicant's request or (2) *prior* to any discussion of compensation with the applicant or an offer of compensation being made, rather than at the time an offer of compensation is made, as under current law. The Act also requires employers to provide employees with a position's wage range and a general description of the position's benefits upon hire, a change in position, or an employee's first request.

Under the new law, "wage range" means the range the employer sets in good faith for the position, rather than the range the employer anticipates relying on when setting wages. "Benefits" include health insurance benefits, retirement benefits, fringe benefits, paid leave, and any compensation other than wages to be offered with the position. The Act also prohibits employers from retaliating or discriminating against an applicant or employee for exercising their rights under the revised law.

Contract Worker Retention

Effective July 1, 2027, Section 9 of Public Act 26-12 establishes new worker-retention protections that may apply when a public school changes contractors or otherwise restructures certain school-based service arrangements, including janitorial, maintenance, and security guard services. Under the new law, a successor contractor, which may in some circumstances be the school district, generally must retain covered employees who elect to remain for a 90-day transition period, and districts should account for the specific notice requirements that may apply when a covered service contract is terminated, not renewed, or replaced.

Paycheck Transparency

Effective October 1, 2026, Section 38 of Public Act 26-12 establishes new paycheck transparency requirements for employers with at least 100 employees. Each covered employer must create a guide for employees explaining pay codes the employer uses for overtime and its most commonly used pay differentials, which may include shift differentials, on-call pay, hazard pay, call-back pay, holiday or weekend pay, or geographical pay differentials. The guide must, if applicable, include at least ten pay codes; be posted on the employer's website in English, Spanish, and the other most common languages spoken by the employer's employees; and include contact information for the designated office or individual who will handle employee disputes regarding calculations of hours and pay differentials. Employers must update the guide each time they add a new pay code for overtime or any pay differential.

Employers must also include a link to the guide on each record of hours given to employees and provide new hires with a link to the guide or a written copy in English and the employee's primary language.

An employer will be deemed in compliance if it uses a third-party payroll services company that provides the pay code guide in accordance with statutory requirements. The law does not require employers to create new pay codes solely to satisfy these requirements.

Automated Employment-Related Decision Technology

Sections 7 through 14 of Public Act 26-15 establish a new framework governing the use of automated technology in employment-related decisions. While the statutory changes take effect on October 1, 2026, the substantive requirements apply only to technology put into use on or after October 1, 2027.

The Act applies to "automated employment-related decision technology," defined as any technology that processes personal data and uses computation to generate an output—such as a prediction, recommendation, classification, ranking, or score—that is a "substantial factor" in making or materially influencing an employment-related decision. An employment-related decision includes decisions (1) to hire, promote, discipline, or discharge, or (2) regarding tenure, terms, or conditions of employment. Routine tools like spreadsheets, data storage software, or purely diagnostic or statistical information that do not influence such decisions are excluded. An employer that uses such technology is a "deployer," while the company that creates or substantially modifies it is a "developer."

Pursuant to Section 8 of the Act, a developer whose technology is deployed in Connecticut must provide its deployer (e.g., the school district) with all information necessary for the deployer to comply with the disclosure requirements described below. This obligation does not apply if the technology was not advertised or configured to materially influence employment decisions. A developer may also contractually assume the deployer's duties.

Sections 9 through 11 of the Act require employers using this technology to make certain disclosures to employees and applicants. Specifically, deployers must disclose "in plain language" to each employee or applicant who interacts with such technology that they are interacting with an automated system, unless it would be obvious to a reasonable person. In addition, before making an employment-related decision using the technology, the deployer must provide written notice to the affected employee or applicant disclosing (1) that automated technology has been deployed; (2) the purpose and nature of the decision; (3) the trade name of the technology; (4) the categories of personal data analyzed; (5) the sources of that data; and (6) contact information for the deployer. The Act does not, however, require the disclosure of trade secrets and information otherwise shielded from disclosure, provided the person withholding information sends notice to the affected individual explaining that information is being withheld and the basis for withholding.

Any violation of these provisions constitutes an unfair or deceptive trade practice, enforceable solely by the Attorney General. There is no private right of action. Before initiating any action for a violation occurring on or before December 31, 2027, the Attorney General may issue a notice of violation if the violation is curable, and the alleged violator must be allowed sixty days to cure before any action is brought.

Existing law prohibits employers from using certain factors, such as race, age, religion, and gender, in employment actions, except in cases of a bona fide occupational qualification or need. Sections 13 and 14 of the Act amend the state anti-discrimination statutes (Sections 46a-60 and 46a-81c of the General Statutes) to clarify that "the use of an automated employment-related decision technology . . . shall not be a defense against a complaint alleging a discriminatory practice." When determining whether a discriminatory practice has occurred, the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities ("CHRO") or court may consider evidence of anti-bias testing or similar proactive efforts used to avoid discriminatory practices, including the quality, efficacy, recency, scope, and results of such initiatives.

Workplace Heat Safety Standards Task Force

Section 202 of Public Act 26-68 establishes a task force to study and provide recommendations on heat safety standards for workplaces. The study must examine best practices to prevent employee exposure to the risk of heat illness and laws in other states governing heat safety standards. The task force must report its findings and recommendations by January 1, 2027.

STATUTORY CHANGES RELATED TO SCHOOL FINANCE AND BUDGET

Information on Prior and Current Year Expenditures in School Budget Process

Under existing law, each board of education must prepare an itemized estimate of the cost of maintaining the public schools for the upcoming fiscal year and submit it to the board of finance or other authority making appropriations to the school district at least two months before the meeting at which appropriations will be made. The "itemized estimate" is defined as "an estimate in which broad budgetary categories including, but not limited to, salaries, fringe benefits, utilities, supplies and grounds maintenance are divided into one or more line items."

Sections 31 and 32 of Public Act 26-1 provide for greater transparency with respect to the itemized estimates prepared during the school budget process. Beginning with the budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2028, when a superintendent prepares the annual itemized estimate, the superintendent must provide the board of education with the "original amount" and "actual amount" of each line item for the two fiscal years immediately preceding the year for which the estimate is being prepared, as well as the "original amount" and "current amount" of each line item for the current fiscal year. The Act defines "original amount" as the amount appropriated to a line item at the start of the fiscal year and "actual amount" as the amount of a line item at the fiscal year's conclusion. The board of education must then submit the itemized estimate, including this information, to the board of finance or other appropriating authority.

Section 33 applies these new requirements to regional boards of education. Specifically, the Act requires that a regional board of education include the additional information concerning line items in the proposed budget it presents at a public district meeting and at its annual meeting.

School Budget Referendum Notifications by Schools

Connecticut General Statutes § 9-369b generally prohibits spending public funds to advocate for or against a pending referendum question, with certain exceptions. The scope of the prohibition is broad and includes direct and indirect expenditures.

The issue of automated calls to remind parents of the date, time and place of a referendum vote is specifically addressed in state statute. Under current law, an automated reminder of a referendum may be given only if it is (1) authorized by the chief elected officer of municipality or the chairperson of a regional school district, and (2) made through a "community notification system," i.e., "a communication system that is available to all residents of a municipality and permits any resident to opt to be notified by the municipality via electronic mail, text, telephone or other electronic or automated means of community events or news."

Effective October 1, 2026, Section 252 of Public Act 26-68 clarifies that the chief elected officer of a municipality or the chair of a regional school board may request that a municipality use its "community notification system" to send notices only about referenda that pertain to such municipality or regional school district. The notice remains subject to existing content requirements: it may include only the referendum's time and location, a statement of the question as it will appear on the ballot, and the approved explanatory text, if applicable. It may not advocate for or against the proposal or question.

The Act also revises the law to expressly permit the Superintendent of Schools for a school district to disseminate a written notice through the schools (but not use a communication notification system) in order to inform the parents and guardians of enrolled students of an upcoming referendum pertaining to the school district. Such written notice is subject to the same content restrictions and prohibition on advocacy described above.

Finally, as under current law, the Act specifies that municipal or regional school district websites are not considered "community notification systems" but may contain factual information about the referendum, subject to the same content requirements and advocacy restrictions described above.

Education Grants

Sections 390, 391, and 394 of Public Act 26-68, as amended by Sections 13 and 14 of Public Act 26-130, provide supplemental education aid and district relief and compensatory use learning aid grants (collectively, "newly enacted state aid") to Connecticut municipalities in specified amounts. The newly enacted state aid must be expended for educational purposes and upon the authorization of the local or regional board of education. The law further specifies that the newly enacted aid shall not be considered part of the budgeted appropriation for education for the town for purposes of calculating the minimum budget requirement for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2028.

As originally passed, towns were prohibited from using the newly enacted state aid to supplant local funding for educational purposes. However, Sections 12 and 15 of Public Act 26-130 struck these prohibitions and replaced them with a conditional framework permitting supplanting in certain circumstances and subjecting such supplanting to specific guardrails. Whether and how a town can supplant local funding with the newly enacted state aid involves consideration of a number of factors, which are beyond the scope of this publication.

Section 392 of Public Act 26-68 further provides that, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2028, payments for educational cost sharing shall not be less than the fiscal year 2027 appropriation plus $152,200,000. The Act does not identify how such funding will be distributed among municipalities.

Finally, Section 390 of Public Act 26-68 also addresses educational aid to magnet schools, charter schools, and agricultural science and technology education centers.

Regional School Board Reserve Funds

Under prior law, regional boards of education were permitted to create a reserve fund for capital and nonrecurring expenditures. In 2024, the law was revised to permit regional boards to create a reserve fund for educational expenditures, in accordance with statutory requirements. Section 35 of Public Act 26-1 explicitly allows regional boards of education to deposit funds that were previously appropriated to and are currently in a reserve fund for capital and nonrecurring expenditures into a reserve fund created for educational expenditures.

Reviewing Board of Education Financial Conditions

Sections 388 and 389 of Public Act 26-68 create a new process by which local or regional boards of education may voluntarily seek state fiscal intervention and oversight from the Municipal Accountability Review Board ("MARB"), a state board charged with providing technical, financial, and other assistance and oversight to municipalities experiencing fiscal distress. Section 389 adds the Commissioner of Education or designee as a member of MARB.

Under Section 388 of the Act, a local or regional board of education may, by a majority vote, submit an application to the Commissioner of Education to participate in a fiscal intervention and oversight plan. Upon receipt of such application, the Commissioner, in consultation with the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management ("OPM"), must conduct an initial review of the board's financial condition, which may include meeting with local officials, assessing the board's budget deficit and the underlying causes of such deficit, and assessing the financial condition of the municipality or municipalities served by the board.

After conducting the initial review, the Commissioner must develop a fiscal intervention and oversight plan for the board and submit the plan to MARB for review. MARB must review the plan in accordance with specific statutory requirements and may recommend revisions to support the long-term financial sustainability of the board and the municipality or municipalities it serves. MARB may also require the board to appear before it to discuss compliance with the plan.

After its review, MARB must submit the plan to the OPM Secretary, who must approve the plan (with or without revisions) and then submit the plan to the SBE for approval. The board of education must implement the plan upon SBE approval.

STATUTORY CHANGES RELATED TO TRANSPORTATION

Zero-Emission School Buses

Current law requires that 100% of school buses providing transportation for school districts in the state must be zero-emission or use alternative fuel by January 1, 2035, and must be fully zero-emission by January 1, 2040.

Sections 24, 36 and 37 of Public Act 26-63 amend these requirements in several ways. Specifically, the Act (1) replaces the 2035 completion requirement with a requirement for municipalities (other than "distressed municipalities," discussed further below) to submit a compliance plan and schedule to the Commissioner of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection ("DEEP") by July 1, 2035, outlining how they will meet the 2040 zero-emission deadline; and (2) lowers the percentage of buses that must be zero-emission by 2040 from 100% to 90%.

Additionally, under current law, school districts located in or containing at least one environmental justice community must have zero-emission buses by January 1, 2030. The Act eliminates this requirement and instead establishes an interim deadline for school buses in "distressed municipalities," defined under Connecticut General Statutes § 32-9p (generally, municipalities meeting federal Urban Development Action Grant distress thresholds).

Under the Act, buses providing transportation for school districts in distressed municipalities must be 50% zero-emission by July 1, 2035, and 90% zero-emission by July 1, 2040. These districts must submit a compliance plan and schedule to the DEEP Commissioner by July 1, 2029.

The Act also modifies the DEEP grant program for municipalities, school districts, and bus operators seeking funds to purchase zero-emission school buses. Key changes include (1) broadening grant purposes by eliminating the federal matching funds requirement and instead requiring that grants provide a portion of funds necessary to maximize federal, state, or other funding sources; (2) requiring DEEP to administer the program in consultation with the Connecticut Green Bank; and (3) giving preference to grant applications for school buses that will operate in distressed municipalities rather than environmental justice communities.

Section 37 of the Act, effective upon passage, requires that, prior to the purchase and use of a zero-emission school bus, local and regional boards of education develop and implement safety plans that (1) consider the ages and development needs of the students transported on such buses, and (2) include procedures for the evacuation of such buses in the event of a fire.

Finally, Section 36 of Public Act 26-63 requires the DEEP Commissioner to create a working group to evaluate and make recommendations on Connecticut school bus fleets' increased use of alternative fuels and technologies, including, but not limited to, biodiesel, propane and electric school buses. The working group, which must include, among others, an individual from the SDE, must submit a report to the General Assembly by February 1, 2027.

Bus Pass Grant Program for Students

Section 64 of Public Act 26-76 establishes a student bus pass grant program to be administered by the Commissioner of Transportation (not the SDE, as an earlier bill proposed). This program will provide grants to boards of education for the purchase and distribution of free passes for public bus transportation, including services provided by transit districts, to students in grades nine through twelve. The Commissioner of Transportation will set forth application timelines and requirements and develop guidelines as needed.

Annual reporting to the education and transportation committees is required beginning July 1, 2027, which report must include "an assessment of the impact of the grant program on student outcomes."

Transportation Grants to Certain Regional Educational Service Centers

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-264i previously required the SDE to provide transportation grants to magnet schools operated by regional educational service centers ("RESCs") in an amount "equal to" one-half of the total estimated transportation cost on or before October 31 of the fiscal year. Section 2 of Public Act 26-106 amends the law to require the SDE to pay an amount "not greater than" one-half of the total estimated transportation cost by October 31 of the fiscal year, rather than an amount "equal to" one-half. The statutory framework for the remainder of the grant payments remains unchanged.

STATUTORY CHANGES RELATED TO EDUCATOR WORKFORCE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Teacher Shortage Areas

Section 3 of Public Act 26-149 amends the Commissioner of Education's annual teacher shortage identification process. Now, in addition to identifying teacher shortages by subject area and geographic area, the Commissioner must also identify teacher shortages by population subgroups that are underrepresented in the teaching profession, by considering data collected in the statewide public school information system.

Aspiring Educator Scholarship

Section 2 of Public Act 26-149 expands eligibility for the "aspiring educators diversity scholarship" to all "aspiring educators" who graduated from any public high school in the state. The Act defines an "aspiring educator" as an individual who is in a population subgroup underrepresented in the teaching profession and identified as a teacher shortage area by the Commissioner. Such scholarships shall be awarded annually.

Teacher Apprenticeship Program

Section 381 of Public Act 26-68 requires the SDE to administer a teacher apprenticeship program. The Department will administer the program beginning in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027, and each year thereafter, within available appropriations. The Act does not prescribe specific programmatic requirements or eligibility criteria for the new program.

School Administrator Mentorship Program

Section 2 of Public Act 26-139 requires the Connecticut Advisory Council for School Administrator Professional Standards, in consultation with the Connecticut Association of Schools, to establish a pilot program for new school administrators that includes training, supports and professional development. The Council must report its implementation plan to the legislature by July 1, 2027, implement the pilot in identified districts for the 2027–2028 school year, and report on results by January 1, 2029.

MISCELLANEOUS

Attendance at Teacher and Administrator Negotiations

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-153d governs a local or regional board of education's duty to negotiate with the teachers' and administrators' unions. It is typical practice for many boards of education to have at least one member, or a subcommittee, of the board present at such negotiations. Section 38 of Public Act 26-1 now requires at least one board member to attend such negotiations. The Act prohibits, however, any board member who is also a member of the organization that has been designated or elected as the exclusive representative of a teachers' or administrators' unit from attending negotiations.

Repealed Reporting Requirement

Section 98 of Public Act 26-1 repeals a statute that required boards of education to annually submit a report detailing the use of websites, online services, and mobile applications without a student data privacy contract as described in Section 10-234bb of the General Statutes.

Integrated Setting

Public Act 26-150 incorporates into state law the "integrated setting" definition from the ADA and requires that every public entity—defined to include state agencies and local government entities—"shall administer services, programs and activities in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of persons with disabilities" who meet eligibility requirements. An "integrated setting" is one that "enables persons with disabilities to interact with nondisabled persons."

Any person aggrieved by an alleged violation may file a discriminatory practice complaint with the CHRO. The Act also adds this new requirement to the statutory definition of "discriminatory practice." These provisions will apply to boards of education.

Bilingual Education and Multilingual Learner Data

Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes § 10-10a, the SDE develops and implements a PSIS, which tracks and reports a variety of data related to student, teacher, and school and district performance. Section 22 of Public Act 26-1 expands the data that must be tracked in PSIS in two ways. First, the Act requires that PSIS include data concerning the academic progress of students in bilingual education programs, as reflected in the mastery examinations. The collection and disaggregation of this data is already required by state law but will now be included in PSIS. Second, the Act requires that measures and data related to the evaluation of bilingual education programs be included in PSIS.

Relatedly, existing law requires the SBE to draft a "bill of rights for parents or guardians of students who are multilingual learners" to assure that the rights of parents and students are adequately safeguarded and protected in the provision of bilingual education. Section 23 of the Act adds to this list the right of multilingual learner students and their parents or guardians to access publicly available data related to the academic progress of students in bilingual education programs and the quality of bilingual education programs, which data must now be included in PSIS.

Racial Imbalance Law

Under existing law, when the SBE finds that a public school is racially imbalanced, the SBE must notify the school's board of education, the board must promptly file a corrective plan, and the SBE must review and act on the plan. Sections 28 through 30 of Public Act 26-1 suspend enforcement of these requirements until July 1, 2030, further extending the suspension implemented in 2024 by Public Act 24-93. During the suspension, the SBE may not issue racial-imbalance notifications, and boards of education are not required to prepare or file corrective plans. The definition of "racial imbalance" remains unchanged.

Working Group to Address Antisemitism in Schools

Section 25 of Public Act 26-1 establishes a 15-member working group to develop guidance and resources to address antisemitism in public schools. Such guidance and resources may include, but are not limited to, (1) suggesting amendments to school district policies to promote student and staff safety; (2) recommending educator and administrator training on antisemitism; and (3) providing guidance on curriculum supports relating to antisemitism, Jewish heritage, and Holocaust and genocide education and awareness. The working group must submit its guidance and legislative recommendations to the Education Committee by January 1, 2027.

SDE Request to Amend State Plan Under ESSA

Under federal law, Connecticut must submit a plan to the U.S. Department of Education addressing standards, assessments, and school and district accountability. Section 9 of Public Act 26-139 authorizes the Commissioner of Education to request that the U.S. Secretary of Education amend Connecticut's approved plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act ("ESSA"). Such request may only be made after consultation with the existing working group convened jointly by the president of the Connecticut Education Association and president of the American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut to review high school grading policies and the information and data selected by the SDE in calculating accountability index scores for school districts. The request may seek a waiver from federal accountability requirements allowing the state to modify its high school accountability model by "reducing the weight assigned to the academic achievement indicator and increasing the weight for other relevant indicators, such as college and career-oriented measures."

Dual Enrollment Programs

Public Act 26-18 amends Connecticut General Statutes § 10-221w, the statute that requires boards of education to adopt a policy regarding the eligibility criteria for student enrollment in an advanced course or program. The Act requires that, by January 1, 2027, the Commissioner of Education must "appoint a dual and concurrent enrollment course coordinator to track the establishment of such courses throughout the state and student outcomes from such courses, including but not limited to, completion rates and average grades, by school district."

Beginning with fiscal year 2027, the law creates a high-need student fee waiver grant program to expand opportunities for high-need high school students to access advanced courses or programs, which the Act specifies includes dual and concurrent enrollment courses. Currently, only a school board can apply to the SDE for reimbursement for fees, such as tuition, paid on behalf of a high-need student. The Act now allows higher education institutions to apply for reimbursement for fee waivers given to a high-need student in an advanced class or program, but specifies that higher education institutions that receive a grant cannot charge the student's parents any course or program enrollment costs.

Therapeutic Arts Program Grant

Public Act 26-139, Section 4, directs the SDE to establish, within available appropriations, a grant program for "therapeutic arts programs" in public schools beginning with the 2027–2028 school year. Grants are available to boards of education or RESCs, with priority given to those serving districts with "a high rate of exclusionary discipline, lack of access to behavioral health services and supports and an existing social-emotional learning program." The Department must post grant information on its website by January 1, 2027, and report annually to the legislature on grants awarded.

Renaming the School Building Projects Advisory Council

Section 398 of Public Act 26-68 renames the School Building Projects Advisory Council as the School Safety and Security Infrastructure Advisory Council ("Council") and revises its responsibilities, membership, and leadership, shifting the Council's focus from school building projects in general to the safety and security aspects of school infrastructure projects.

Sections 398 and 399 of Public Act 26-68 revise the law to require the Council to make various recommendations and conduct studies relating to school safety and security infrastructure projects. The Council must report findings to the Governor and the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education and public safety. The Act also increases the Council's membership from 11 to 13 by adding one representative each from a rural, suburban, and urban school district—each with experience in school safety and security project planning—and removing the current member with experience administering the State Building Code; revises the qualifications for gubernatorial appointees; and changes the Council's chairperson from the Commissioner of Department of Administrative Services ("DAS") to the Commissioner of DESPP.

School Construction Program Grant Reimbursement Rate

Section 397 of Public Act 26-68 amends Connecticut General Statutes § 10-285a to cap the total reimbursement percentage a local or regional board of education may receive under the school construction grant program at 95% of eligible costs and creates a new enrollment growth bonus.

Under existing law, the school construction grant program reimburses school districts for eligible school construction project costs. The top standard reimbursement rate is 70% for new construction projects and 80% for renovation projects. However, the law provides additional reimbursement rate bonuses, such as an additional 15% for an early childhood care and education program in an elementary school or 10% for cooperative arrangements between school districts. Section 397 of the Act prohibits combining any available bonuses in a way that results in more than 95% reimbursement for a single project.

Section 397 also establishes a new bonus of an additional 20% for any school district where student enrollment has increased by 20% or more over the 10-year period immediately preceding the date the school construction project application is submitted to DAS, provided such increase shall not result in a reimbursement percentage exceeding 95%.

Endowed High School or Academy and School Construction

Under current law, an incorporated or endowed high school or academy approved by the SBE may apply and be eligible to receive a school building project grant commitment from the state, provided the project complies with the provisions of the school construction grant chapter. Section 404 of Public Act 26-68 amends Connecticut General Statutes § 10-285b to authorize the Commissioner of Administrative Services to waive school construction grant requirements, under certain conditions, in order to provide such grants to the state's three endowed high schools or academies: the Gilbert School in Winchester, the Norwich Free Academy in Norwich, and the Woodstock Academy in Woodstock.

RESC and Connecticut Technical Education and Career System Report on Work-Based Learning Programs

Section 25 of Public Act 26-12 requires each RESC and the executive director of the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System ("CTECS") to submit a report concerning high school work-based learning programs provided in the region served by each RESC or by CTECS. Such report shall be submitted to the General Assembly by July 1, 2027, and annually thereafter, and must be made publicly available on the SDE website.

Regional Workforce Navigator

Connecticut General Statutes § 31-3k requires regional workforce development boards to be established within the DOL to assess regional workforce needs and priorities; coordinate employment, education, and training programs; and serve as the lead agency for local workforce development initiatives in accordance with the state workforce development plan and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Effective October 1, 2026, Section 27 of Public Act 26-12 adds a "regional workforce navigator" as a mandatory member of each regional workforce development board. The regional workforce navigator shall be responsible for connecting individuals participating in adult education programs, as well as students in grades 9 through 12, with workforce opportunities, such as internships, job shadowing opportunities, credentials, and apprenticeships offered in the state.

Training on Adult Education Programs

Section 28 of Public Act 26-12 directs the Chief Workforce Officer to develop training on adult education programs in the state by October 1, 2026. Such training must be developed in consultation with educational institutions, regional workforce development boards, and the Governor's Workforce Council and be provided to regional workforce navigators no later than December 30, 2026.

School Paraeducator Advisory Council

Section 52 of Public Act 26-12 adjusts paraeducator representation on the School Paraeducator Advisory Council (the "Advisory Council"). Under current law, the Commissioner of Education is required to establish an Advisory Council that includes, among other appointees, one paraeducator from each statewide bargaining representative organization that represents paraeducators with instructional responsibilities. The Act replaces the requirement for one paraeducator from each such organization with a requirement for five paraeducators and further specifies that these five paraeducators must be nominated by the Connecticut AFL-CIO. The Act does not otherwise change the Advisory Council's remaining membership or its duties.

Teacher Certification Preparation Program

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-145a sets forth specific components of teacher preparation programs. Since July 1, 2020, teacher preparation programs have been required to include instruction on computer science and information technology skills. Section 27 of Public Act 26-15 specifies that the instruction in computer science may include instruction in topics such as the responsible use of emerging technologies.

Smart Start Grant Increase

The Office of Early Childhood, in consultation with the SDE, administers the Connecticut Smart Start competitive grant program, pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes § 10-506, to provide grants to local and regional boards of education for capital and operating expenses related to establishing or expanding a preschool program under the jurisdiction of a board. Section 2 of Public Act 26-105 increases the maximum annual operating expenses grant under this program from $5,000 to $6,500 per child served, and from $75,000 to $97,500 per preschool classroom.

Plan on Intellectual Disability Definition

Section 1 of Public Act 26-151 requires the Commissioner of Developmental Services to produce a plan with recommendations on developing a standard definition of "intellectual disability" that originates before an individual reaches eighteen years of age. The definition must, among other things, be characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior, including conceptual, social, and practical skills. The Commissioner must submit a report on the plan, which must also include a recommendation for a timeline for transitioning to a new definition of intellectual disability, by July 1, 2027.

American Sign Language Working Group

Section 2 of Public Act 26-151 and Section 4 of Public Act 26-149 require the establishment of an American Sign Language ("ASL") education working group. The working group will provide recommendations to the SDE regarding (1) curriculum guidance for ASL instruction; (2) teacher certification standards; and (3) guidance to educator preparation programs in the state concerning the expansion of ASL and interpretation education programs. While essentially identical, Public Act 26-151 requires that the working group include representatives from a variety of organizations as well as appointees by legislators and the Governor, whereas Public Act 26-149 includes the same representative members but does not include appointees. Both laws become effective on January 1, 2027.

ASL Guidance

Section 5 of Public Act 26-149 requires the SDE to issue to each local and regional board of education, not later than July 1, 2030, the curriculum guidance developed by the ASL education working group established under the Act.

Charter School Approval Process

The SBE reviews applications for charter schools and grants initial certificates of approval for local and state charter schools on an annual basis. Section 1 of Public Act 26-106 converts this annual review requirement into a biennial review period aligned with the state budget process. For the biennium beginning July 1, 2027, and each biennium thereafter, the Commissioner of Education must ensure that the timing for granting initial certificates of approval for charters coincides with the preparation of the state budget for such biennium. The Act does not otherwise change the existing statutory criteria the SBE must consider when determining whether to grant an initial certificate of approval.

Reporting of Uniform School Calendar Data

Section 3 of Public Act 26-106 repeals the requirement for the SDE to report which boards of education have adopted the uniform regional school calendar and any related recommendations for legislation.

Regional School District Feasibility Report

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-43 governs the process by which a regional school district study committee evaluates the feasibility and desirability of establishing a proposed regional school district. If a study committee's findings support the creation of a regional school district, the committee's written report must address several factors, including detailed educational and budget plans for at least a five-year period. Section 7 of Public Act 26-106 amends Connecticut General Statutes § 10-43(a) to add two new requirements to the committee's report. The Act now requires that, when feasible, the budget plan included in the committee's report be reviewed or audited by an independent third party to determine its viability. The Act also requires the report to include consideration of transportation costs associated with the establishment of the proposed regional school district.

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Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity Working Groups

Section 1 of Public Act 26-62 requires the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity ("CWCSEO") to establish two working groups. The first working group will study the treatment of eating disorders and compile information about treatment resources to be made available to the public. The second working group will develop a statewide food education roadmap and a model school nutrition curriculum. The roadmap and curriculum must include, at minimum, developmentally appropriate, evidence-based education programs on disordered eating behaviors, nutrition, culinary skills, growing food, food safety and food systems. Beginning January 1, 2028, and annually thereafter, the executive director of CWCSEO shall report on the results of the working groups' studies to the Transforming Children's Behavioral Health Policy and Planning Committee (the "Committee") and the General Assembly. Section 2 of the Act instructs the Committee to annually review the progress of the working groups.

DCF Feasibility Study

Section 3 of Public Act 26-62 requires DCF, in collaboration with the Departments of Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health and Addiction Services, to study the feasibility of establishing an inpatient facility to provide psychiatric treatment services to children and young adults, between the ages of 14 and 21, who have intellectual or developmental disabilities. The Commissioner of Social Services shall file a report, no later than July 1, 2027, on the results of the study, which must include a variety of statutory elements, with the General Assembly.

Preschool Through Twenty and Workforce Information Network Data System Name Change and Report Requirement

Effective October 1, 2026, Section 9 of Public Act 26-48 changes the name of Preschool Through Twenty and Workforce Information Network ("P20 WIN") to Data Link Connecticut ("DataLinkCT"). In accordance with Public Act 24-45, what was then referred to as P20 WIN was required to, no later than January 1, 2025, and annually thereafter, submit an annual report on disconnected youth to the General Assembly. Section 14 of Public Act 26-48 now requires DataLinkCT to submit that report no later than January 1, 2027, and biennially (rather than annually) thereafter.

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