2025 EDUCATION LEGISLATION SUMMARY

A Shipman & Goodwin LLP® Legislation Summary

In its 2025 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, 2025 or upon passage. Links to the new legislation are provided in the electronic version of this publication.

STATUTORY CHANGES RELATED TO STUDENTS

Chronic Absenteeism Prevention and Intervention Plan Updates

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-198d requires the CSDE to develop a chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan for use by boards of education. Section 34 of Public Act 25-93 requires the CSDE to semiannually review the plan and revise as needed. The revisions must incorporate the findings of the most recent report of disconnected youth developed by the Connecticut Preschool Through Twenty and Workforce Information Network. The plan must also include policies and procedures concerning truants, as required by Connecticut General Statutes § 10-198a, and must include the use of an early indication tool designed to quickly identify students at risk for being chronically absent or disconnected from school (e.g., students who are at risk of not fulfilling graduation requirements, students who have a history of behavioral concerns or disciplinary issues, and students who are homeless).

Codification of the Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP)

Effective July 1, 2026, Section 315 of Public Act 25-168 codifies the Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP), which the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has operated in practice for several years. Beginning in fiscal year 2027, and subject to available appropriations, the CSDE will formally administer the program and award grants to boards of education to implement home visitation programs aimed at reducing student absenteeism. In awarding these grants, the CSDE will give priority to school districts with the highest levels of chronic absenteeism. The CSDE must award grants to at least ten school districts in any year that it awards grants under the program. Starting no later than December 31, 2028, the CSDE will be required to report on the program's implementation, including an evaluation of the program's success in each district that received a grant within the past two fiscal years.

Homelessness and Student Discipline

Sections 38 and 39 of Public Act 25-93 amend the statutes governing suspension and expulsion proceedings. Now, before holding a suspension or expulsion hearing, an administrator, school counselor, or school social worker at the school in which the student is enrolled

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must contact the board of education's designated local homeless education liaison to determine whether the student is homeless, as defined by 42 U.S.C. § 11343a. If the student is identified as homeless, the board of education or impartial hearing board, in the case of an expulsion hearing, or the administration, in the case of a suspension hearing, must consider the impact of homelessness on the student's behavior during the hearing. In addition, a homeless student may not be expelled unless a plan of interventions and supports is developed to mitigate the impact of homelessness on the student's behavior. Any student who is determined to be homeless and expelled for a second time must be provided a meeting with the local homeless education liaison.

Educational Stability for Military-Connected Students

Sections 7 and 8 of Public Act 25-15 require boards of education to implement measures aimed at minimizing educational disruptions for students whose parents serve in the armed forces.

Under Section 7 of the Act, when a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 plan enrolls in a Connecticut public school after the start of the school year due to a parent's military transfer or reassignment, boards of education must (1) transfer the student's records and evaluations; (2) perform any reevaluations; and (3) hold a planning and placement team (PPT) meeting or a meeting to establish a 504 plan within thirty days of enrollment. Boards of education must also take any other steps necessary to ensure a minimally disruptive transition to the provision of comparable services.

Under Section 8 of the Act, when a parent in the armed forces receives orders that result in a change of residency during the school year, the student may remain enrolled in their current school for the remainder of the school year. A student in grade eleven may continue to be enrolled for an additional school year through grade twelve. For a student to be eligible, the parent must remain a member of the armed forces.

Office of the Educational Ombudsperson

Section 27 of Public Act 25-93 establishes an Office of the Educational Ombudsperson within the Office of Governmental Accountability to, among other things, review and attempt to resolve complaints from families, assist school district employees involved in PPT meetings, and monitor the implementation of federal, state, and local laws and policies relating to students. The Office of the Educational Ombudsperson shall be under the direction of an Educational Ombudsperson appointed by the Governor and selected from among individuals with expertise and experience in educational advocacy, special education, and educational law.

Mental and Behavioral Health Pilot Program in Priority School Districts

Section 51 of Public Act 25-97 requires the CSDE to establish, within available appropriations, a pilot program to address mental and behavioral health in priority school districts. The program must be in place by January 1, 2026. The pilot program will provide at least 100,000 students in priority school districts with access to an electronic mental and behavioral health awareness and treatment tool. The Commissioner of Education will select the website, mobile application, or online service that will be used. It must include educational resources, moderated peer-to-peer support services, and private online sessions with licensed health care providers. The pilot program is also intended to raise awareness of mental and behavioral health issues affecting students and facilitate partnerships between districts and community organizations.

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STATUTORY CHANGES RELATED TO EMPLOYEES

Connecticut Paid Sick Leave Increments

During the 2024 legislative session, the legislature passed Public Act 24-8 and significantly expanded and revised Connecticut General Statutes §31-57r *et seq.* (Connecticut Paid Sick Leave) to cover nearly all of an employer's employees, rather than only "service workers." Among other things, Public Act 24-8 also expanded the reasons for which an employee must be allowed to use paid sick leave and required that such sick leave accrue in one-hour increments.

Section 233 of Public Act 25-174 allows boards of education to require that school employees use their accrued paid sick leave in the increments set in their applicable collective bargaining agreements negotiated by the organization designated as the exclusive bargaining representative for such employees, rather than in one-hour increments, as long as (1) the employees accrue paid sick leave, or any other paid leave or combination of other paid leave, at a rate greater than one hour of leave for every 30 hours worked; and (2) the employees are not prohibited from using up to 40 hours of accrued leave per year, for the purposes provided for and in accordance with the provisions applicable to statutory paid sick leave.

Family and Medical Leave for Non-Certified School Employees

Starting October 1, 2025, Public Act 25-174 extends two state programs—the Connecticut Family and Medical Leave Act (CT FMLA) and Connecticut Paid Family and Medical Leave (CT Paid Leave)—to employees of "public school operators" whose positions do not require a license under Chapter 166 of the Connecticut General Statutes (hereinafter referred to as "non-certified school employees"). "Public school operator" means a local or regional board of education, an interdistrict magnet school operator, a state or local charter school, an endowed or incorporated academy, or a cooperative arrangement.

Section 237 of the Act extends CT FMLA to cover non-certified school employees, which allows them to take job-protected unpaid leave. CT FMLA functions similarly to the federal FMLA but has some important differences, including but not limited to the definition of a covered family member under the law. Under CT FMLA, eligible employees can take up to twelve weeks of unpaid leave in a 12-month period for qualifying reasons, with an additional two weeks available for certain pregnancy-related conditions. In addition, covered employees may elect, or employers may require, employees to use certain accrued paid time off concurrently with their CTFMLA leave, provided that employees may retain at least two weeks of such leave.

Similarly, effective October 1, 2025, Section 234 of Public Act 25-174 extends CT Paid Leave to cover non-certified school employees. Through CT Paid Leave, eligible employees can apply for partial wage replacement during their leave, funded through a mandatory 0.5% payroll tax on earnings up to the Social Security contribution and benefit base, deducted from employee paychecks. Employers are responsible for ensuring the appropriate payroll deductions for non-certified employees, and non-certified employees cannot opt out of such payroll deductions. CT Paid Leave applications are processed not by employers, but by the Connecticut Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Authority (Authority), the state agency that administers this program. A covered employee may receive compensation through CT Paid Leave concurrently with employer-provided benefits, provided the total compensation during the period of leave does not exceed the employee's regular rate of compensation.

Sections 235 and 236 of the Act also make changes to accommodate non-certified school employees' particular employment schedules by (1) allowing the Authority to establish an alternative method to calculate their base period and base weekly earnings, and (2) allowing non-certified school employees to qualify for CT FMLA job-protected leave if they were employed by the public school operator for at least three months during the previous twelve-month period, rather than for the three months preceding their need for leave. Notably, unlike the federal FMLA, there is no minimum hours' requirement for employees to be eligible for CT FMLA.

Finally, the Act makes other conforming changes to the law. Current state law requires that boards of education provide benefits equal to those provided by the federal FMLA to non-certified school employees who have been employed by the board for at least twelve months and worked at least 950 (rather than 1,250) hours for such board in the previous twelve months. Effective October 1, 2025, the new law removes the lower work-requirement threshold for these employees. Therefore, effective October 1, 2025, all school employees will need to meet the twelve months of employment and 1,250 work hours requirements in order to be eligible for federal FMLA benefits.

Public school operators will need to prepare for these significant changes. Among other things, public school operators must register with the Authority, familiarize themselves with quarterly wage reporting requirements, and establish necessary record-keeping systems. In addition, public school operators will need to carefully review and update their leave policies and practices to ensure compliance with existing, as well as new, legal requirements.

Sexual Assault Victim and Human Trafficking Victim as a Protected Class

Existing human rights and opportunities laws prohibit various forms of discrimination in many areas, including but not limited to employment. Effective October 1, 2025, Sections 2 through 15 of Public Act 25-139 extend such prohibition to discrimination based on an individual's status as a victim of sexual assault or as a victim of human trafficking. The Act defines the terms "victim of sexual assault" and "victim of trafficking in person" as individuals who are victims of various crimes under Connecticut law related to sexual assault and human trafficking. Individuals aggrieved by an alleged discriminatory practice based on an individual's status as a victim of sexual assault or human trafficking can file a complaint with the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO).

Under the Act, effective October 1, 2025, it is a discriminatory practice for an employer to deny an employee a reasonable leave of absence to: (1) seek attention for injuries caused by sexual assault or human trafficking, including for a child who is a victim of sexual assault or human trafficking, so long as the employee is not the perpetrator against the child; (2) obtain services, including safety planning, from a domestic violence agency or rape crisis center; (3) obtain psychological counseling, including for a child, so long as the employee is not the perpetrator against the child; (4) take other actions to increase safety from future incidents, including temporary or permanent relocation; or (5) obtain legal services, assist in the prosecution of the offense, or otherwise participate in related legal proceedings. An employee who is absent from work under these circumstances must provide to the employer a certification that meets statutory requirements, upon request, within a reasonable time after the absence.

DCF Training on Human Trafficking

Under existing law, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) is required to develop an initial and refresher training program to accurately and promptly identify and report suspected human trafficking. Section 17 of Public Act 25-139 removes the requirement that the training program developed by DCF include a video presentation. The Act permits the presentation to be in any format, not just video. Existing law, unchanged by the Act, requires board of education employees who have contact with students to complete the initial program within six months of hire and every three years thereafter.

Teacher Education and Mentoring Program for a Professional Certificate

Prior law required the CSDE to issue a provisional educator certificate to a teacher that satisfactorily completed the teacher education and mentoring induction program. In the last legislative session, the legislature repealed the provisional educator certification, as of July 1, 2025. Section 15 of Public Act 25-143 provides that to obtain a professional educator certificate, teachers must still complete the induction program, in addition to the other requirements set forth in Connecticut General Statutes § 10-145b, including having completed at least fifty school months of successful teaching for one or more boards of education or approved nonpublic schools in this state while holding an initial or provisional educator certificate, and either holding a master's degree or higher in an appropriate subject matter area or completing an alternate pathway to professional licensure jointly approved by the State Board of Education and the Educator Preparation and Certification Board. The Act also repeals any requirement that boards of education and their Superintendents inform the State Board of Education of the teachers eligible for a provisional educator certificate, amending that requirement to provide notice of eligibility for a professional educator certificate.

Reduction in State Contribution to Retired Teachers' Health Insurance

Section 301 of Public Act 25-168 reduces the state's share of health insurance costs for retired teachers in fiscal year 2026. Under Connecticut General Statutes § 10-183t, the state had been required to contribute one-third of the annual premium for the basic Teachers' Retirement Board (TRB) health insurance plan. For fiscal year 2026, this contribution will decrease to 25%. The Act similarly reduces the state's share of the monthly subsidy provided to retired teachers enrolled in local board of education health insurance plans. The state's contribution toward this subsidy will also decrease from one-third to 25% for fiscal year 2026.

Expansion of the Alliance District Loan Subsidy Program

Under existing law, the Alliance District Education and Counselor Loan Subsidy Program is operated by the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority (CHESLA) and provides subsidized interest rates on CHESLA loans that refinance the private student loans of teachers, paraeducators, and school counselors employed in an alliance district. Public Act 25-105 refashions the existing program and broadens the criteria for eligibility. The renamed "Alliance District Loan Subsidy Program" is now also available to individuals employed in a "high priority occupation" by a board of education or technical school in an alliance district. The CSDE, in consultation with CHESLA, will be responsible for designating the qualifying high priority occupations and establishing program guidelines and eligibility criteria. Such occupations, generally, (1) promote the health, welfare, or education of residents in municipalities with alliance districts; (2) have a high demand for their services; and (3) are experiencing or are projected to experience a workforce shortage that may affect the level of services provided.

New Training, Education, and Testing Grant

Section 25 of Public Act 25-93 establishes, beginning in fiscal year 2027, a new special education training, education, and testing competitive grant program. Under the grant program, CSDE will award grants to individual educators and paraeducators to help cover the costs associated with any professional training, education, and testing requirements related to an applicant's ability to provide special education and related services. Both current and prospective educators and paraeducators are eligible. Grant recipients must commit to three years of providing special education and related services in a school in an alliance district and the CSDE is required to establish repayment criteria for grantees who do not work for three years in an alliance district.

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STATUTORY CHANGES RELATED TO SCHOOL DISTRICT OPERATIONS

Interactions Between School Personnel and Immigration Authorities

Public Act 25-1 addresses immigration enforcement activity at schools and establishes new responsibilities for superintendents, boards of education, and other entities regarding the development of procedures for interacting with federal immigration authorities.

Section 1 of the Act directs each public school superintendent, regional educational service center (RESC), state charter school, and endowed or incorporated academy to designate, on or before April 1, 2025, at least one administrator at each school to be responsible for interacting with federal immigration authorities who appear in person at the school or contact the school to request information.

Section 2 of the Act amends Connecticut General Statutes § 10-222m and directs boards of education to update, for the 2024-2025 school year and each year thereafter, their school security and safety plans. Such plans must, under existing law, be developed for each school and be based on standards established by the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection. Under the new law, they must also include protocols for interacting with federal immigration authorities who appear in person at the school or contact the school to request information. Such protocols must be based on the CSDE's guidance document regarding this topic and include, at a minimum:

(i) the designation of at least one administrator at each school to serve as the individual responsible for interacting with federal immigration authorities;

(ii) provisions that such administrator, or any other school employee, may (1) request and record a federal immigration authority's identification, (2) ask the federal immigration authority if the individual is in possession of a judicial warrant and, if so, to produce such judicial warrant, (3) review any warrant or other materials that the federal immigration authority produces to determine who issued the warrant or other material and what it authorizes such federal immigration authority to do, and (4) consult with legal counsel for the school district, or guidance developed by such legal counsel, on how to interact with the federal immigration authority; and

(iii) permit other school personnel to direct a federal immigration authority who requests access to any records, information, the interior of the school building, or other school personnel to communicate with the administrator designated to interact with federal immigration authorities.

Similarly, although Connecticut General Statutes § 10-222m had already required boards to establish a school security and safety committee at each of its schools, Public Act 25-1 mandates that boards add a new member to each committee: the school administrator who will serve as the individual responsible for interacting with immigration enforcement agents.

District Repair and Improvement Project Program

Section 131 of Public Act 25-174 creates the District Repair and Improvement Project (DRIP) program to assist public school operators with the costs of minor capital repairs, improvements, and maintenance; mitigate the need for more costly and extensive renovations in the future, and improve accessibility to safe and well-maintained school buildings and grounds. More specifically, the DRIP program will provide financial assistance to public school operators for (1)

constructing, renovating, repairing, and enlarging public school buildings or grounds, including parking lots, athletic fields, and playgrounds; (2) improvements to school facilities for compliance with health, safety, or code requirements; or (3) the purchase, installation, or maintenance of improvements to school infrastructure, including heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, plumbing, electrical systems, and roofing. "Public school operator" is defined as any (A) board of education, (B) regional educational service center, (C) interdistrict magnet school operator, (D) endowed academy, or (E) state charter school.

The Act directs the Office of Policy Management (OPM) to allocate an amount to each public school operator in accordance with an allocation formula set forth in the new law and create subaccounts from which DRIP grants can be made. The Act further directs OPM, on March 1st of each year, to notify each public school operator of the amount of its allocation and post on its website such allocation amounts and the calculations by which they were made. OPM shall maintain records indicating, for each public school operator's subaccount, the amount credited to the subaccount each year, the amount paid out in DRIP grants and charged to the subaccount, and the balance available for additional DRIP grants. Additional requirements are set forth in the Act.

Repeal of Reading Instruction Survey Requirement

Section 14 of Public Act 25-143 repeals the requirement that boards of education require certain certified individuals to take a survey on reading instruction developed by the CSDE, which had been required beginning with the school year commencing July 1, 2014 and biennially thereafter. The Act also exempts the results of any such completed surveys from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.

New Superintendent Reports

Section 32 of Public Act 25-93 requires superintendents to annually present certain information at a regularly scheduled board of education meeting held between June 1 and September 30. The presentation must include: (1) the number and names of all community-based organizations with whom the board of education has contracted to provide support services to students in the school district, disaggregated by school and type of support services provided; (2) the workforce development programs offered by the board to students that involve partnerships with outside entities (including arrangements such as cooperatives, internships, in-school job training programs, and in-school workforce board presentations); and (3) attrition data for certified and non-certified staff, disaggregated by school and subject (not including in-district transfers).

Nonlapsing Account and Reserve Fund

Under existing law, local boards of education may deposit up to 2% of unexpended funds from the prior fiscal year from the budgeted appropriation for education into a nonlapsing account and regional boards of education may create a reserve fund for educational expenditures with appropriations not to exceed 2% of the annual district budget.

Section 36 of Public Act 25-93 requires, beginning in fiscal year 2026, local boards of education to compile an annual report regarding this nonlapsing account. The report must include, but is not limited to, the total balance of the account, the amount deposited into such account in a fiscal year, and an accounting of the expenditures made from such account. The board must then submit the report to the CSDE and the exclusive bargaining representative for certified employees. Further, the local board of education must annually, not later than thirty days from the adoption of the board's budget, notify the exclusive bargaining representative for certified employees of (1) the establishment of the account or (2) the board's intended uses for any funds in the account during the next fiscal year. Section 35 of the

Act requires the board to include the balance of any nonlapsing account in the annual report of the board of education that is required under Connecticut General Statutes §§ 10-222 and 10-224.

Section 37 of Public Act 25-93 requires, beginning in fiscal year 2026, regional boards of education that have created a reserve fund to (1) make available and annually update information regarding the fund, including, but not limited to, the total balance of the fund, the amount deposited into the fund in a fiscal year, and an accounting of the expenditures made from the fund. A regional board of education must also, not later than thirty days from the adoption of the board's budget, notify the exclusive bargaining representative for certified employees of (i) the establishment of the reserve fund for educational expenditures, or (ii) the board's intended uses for any funds in such fund during the next fiscal year.

Administration of Epinephrine and Glucagon

Under existing law, a school nurse, or in the absence of a school nurse, a qualified school employee shall maintain epinephrine in cartridge injectors for the purpose of emergency first aid to students who experience allergic reactions and do not have prior written authorization of a parent and prior written order of a qualified medical professional for the administration of epinephrine. Such employee may administer epinephrine in accordance with policies and procedures adopted by the board of education, provided that the individual completes the required training and the student's parent has not submitted, in writing, that epinephrine shall not be administered to such student. Section 19 of Public Act 25-143 now provides that epinephrine may be delivered via cartridge injectors or administered as a nasal spray or via any other medical equipment approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration ("FDA") that is used to deliver epinephrine in a standard dose for emergency first aid response to allergic reactions.

Similarly, under existing law, the school nurse, or in the absence of the school nurse, a qualified school employee may administer glucagon to a student with diabetes that may require prompt treatment in order to protect the student against serious harm or death, provided the student's parent has provided written authorization and the student's physician has provided a written order. The Act now allows the administration of glucagon not only through an injector or injectable equipment, but also as a nasal spray or any other medical equipment approved by the FDA to deliver glucagon in an appropriate dose for emergency first aid response to diabetes.

Under existing law, boards of education are prohibited from denying a student access to school transportation solely due to the student's need to carry a cartridge injector to deliver epinephrine in a standard dose for emergency first aid response to allergic reactions. Section 21 of the Act expands this prohibition to include students who carry nasal spray or any other FDA approved medical equipment for the same purpose.

Section 22 of the Act specifies that the life-threatening allergic reaction and administration of medication training program, required by Connecticut General Statutes § 14-276b for school bus drivers, must include training on the administration of epinephrine not only by a cartridge injector, but also by nasal spray and other FDA approved medical equipment for the administration of epinephrine.

Section 23 of the Act makes conforming changes to include, in addition to injectable equipment, nasal spray or any other medical equipment approved by FDA as a means for administration of epinephrine in the statutes governing before or after school programs, provided all other statutory requirements are met.

Immunity from Liability for the Administration of Medication for School Personnel and Bus Drivers

Under existing law, a teacher or other school personnel, who on school grounds or in the school building or at a school function, who has completed both a course in first aid and a course given by the medical advisor of the school or by a licensed physician in the administration of medication by *injection*, who renders emergency care by administration of such medication by injection to an individual in need, shall not be liable to the person who they assisted for civil damages for any injuries that result from any ordinary negligence. These school personnel are not immune, however, from liability for acts constituting gross, willful or wanton negligence. Section 27 of Public Act 25-143 revises state law to protect school personnel from liability not only for the administration of medication by injection, but also for the administration of medication in general, for which all of the above-described requirements are met.

Existing law also provides immunity for school bus drivers who render emergency care, by administration of medication with a cartridge injector during the provision of school transportation services, to a student in need thereof who has a medically diagnosed allergic condition that may require prompt treatment. Section 27 of the Act extends this immunity to the administration of epinephrine, generally, which includes, in addition to injectable equipment, nasal spray or any other medical equipment approved by FDA that is used to deliver epinephrine in a standard dose for an emergency first aid response to allergic reactions.

Bleeding Control Training

Public Act 25-160 allows the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection to administer a bleeding control trainer qualification program in each district health department in accordance with statutory requirements. If a district health department administers the trainer qualification program, school employees may be eligible to participate in such a program. In addition, the trainer qualification program may be included as part of an in-service training program for school employees provided pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes § 10-220a.

STATUTORY CHANGES RELATED TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

Definition of "Child Requiring Special Education" Due to Developmental Delay

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a state may, at its discretion, define the term "child with a disability" to include a child aged three through nine, or any subset of that age range, who needs special education and related services due to developmental delays. Under prior law, Connecticut defined a "child requiring special education" to include exceptional children ages three through five that are experiencing a developmental delay that causes them to require special education. Section 1 of Public Act 25-67 increases the age range for children meeting this definition to children ages three through eight that are experiencing developmental delays. Developmental delay is defined as a significant delay in physical, communication, cognitive, social or emotional, or adaptive development, as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures.

Special Education Costs

Under existing law, to be eligible for reimbursement of special education costs paid to a private provider of special education services, a board of education must have entered into a written contract with such provider for the provision of such services. Section 16 of Public Act 25-143 requires any such written contract entered into or amended on or

after July 1, 2025 for these purposes to include a provision that requires the private provider of special education services to submit a base tuition and cost for services for each school year in which services are to be provided not later than December 31st preceding the school year in which services are to be provided. Similarly, Section 17 of the Act requires each RESC providing special education services for a board of education to submit a base tuition and cost for services not later than December 31st preceding the school year in which services are to be provided.

Fixed Annual Costs for Special Education Services

Section 2 of Public Act 25-67 generally prohibits a "charging entity" from increasing the amount charged to a board of education for services required under a student's IEP during the school year, unless the change is due to a change in the services provided pursuant to a change in a student's IEP. Section 1 of the Act defines "charging entity" as "an approved private provider of special education services, regional educational service center, operator of an interdistrict magnet school program, state charter school, a cooperative arrangement pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes § 10-158a, a board of education operating an outplacement program or as part of the statewide interdistrict public school attendance program pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes § 10-266aa, or a provider of special education transportation services."

Under the new law, the CSDE may permit, upon request, a charging entity to increase the amount it charges a board of education for special education if there is a substantial increase in costs for (1) the services being provided for a student, or (2) the charging entity's operation. The Act directs the Commissioner of Education to establish the form and manner for making such requests. The Act also directs the Commissioner to provide a written approval or denial within sixty days of receipt of any request.

Rate-Setting for Providers of Special Education and Related Services

Rates for special education services, excluding transportation, provided by a public provider, and rates for related services provided by a charging entity. Section 3 of Public Act 25-67 requires the CSDE to set rates that special education and related services providers can charge to boards of education. Pursuant to the new law, the CSDE must publish, by January 1, 2028, a full rate schedule for (1) all costs related to the provision of special education services, excluding transportation, that are provided by a public provider of special education services, and (2) related services that a charging entity (defined above in Section 1 of the Act) provides pursuant to an IEP. Such full rate schedules become effective on July 1, 2028, and all amounts charged to a board of education by (1) a public provider of special education services for special education services and (2) a charging entity for the provision of related services, shall be in accordance with the rates established by the CSDE, provided such rates were posted on or before January 1 of the prior school year.

The full rate schedule will also be accompanied by standards for billing that describe how the charging entity's operational expenses should be proportionally and appropriately attributed to the services provided to individual students. Pursuant to the new law, the CSDE must review such rate schedule at least biennially and may revise such rate schedule as necessary.

Section 3 of the Act also directs the CSDE, no later than December 31, 2027, to establish individual rates for each special education and related service and permits the CSDE to establish such rates for the period of July 1, 2025, through December 31, 2027. After each rate is established, the CSDE shall notify boards of education and post the rate on the CSDE's website no later than January 1 of the following year. Any such rate shall become effective on July

1 of the year after the rate was posted. A public provider of special education services for special education services and a charging entity for the provision of related services must charge only these posted rates.

Importantly, the Act states that any amount charged to and paid by a board of education for special education and related services that exceeds the amounts established by the CSDE shall not be eligible for reimbursement under Connecticut General Statutes § 10-76g.

Rates for special education services, excluding transportation, provided by approved private providers. The Act also directs the Commissioner, not later than December 31, 2027, to develop proposed individual rates for each special education service, excluding transportation services, for all approved private providers of special education services. For the period commencing July 1, 2025, until December 31, 2027, the Commissioner may develop such individual rates for each special education service. The Commissioner must submit all proposed rates no later than January 1 following their development to the General Assembly for approval or disapproval. If the General Assembly fails to approve or disapprove such proposed rates on or before March 15 after such submission, the proposed rates shall be deemed approved. Any such proposed rate that is approved by the General Assembly or deemed approved shall become effective on July 1 following such approval.

Rates for special education transportation service providers. Section 4 of the Act requires the CSDE to develop and post on its website billing standards for special education transportation service providers that charge boards of education for transportation to and from special education outplacements. The CSDE must develop these billing standards by January 1, 2027, to be effective at the start of the 2027-2028 school year, July 1, 2027.

Reasonable Costs Associated with the Provision of Special Education Services

Section 5 of Public Act 25-67 provides that when the state statutes use the term "reasonable costs" associated with the provision of special education and related services, "reasonable costs" means the amount allowed to be charged to a board of education by a charging entity (defined above in Section 1 of the Act) under the individualized special education and related services rate schedule established pursuant to Section 3 of the Act. On and after July 1, 2025, there shall be no presumption that "reasonable costs" means the actual cost incurred for the provision of special education and related services.

Private Special Education Provider Contract Requirements

Under existing law, a board of education may enter into a contract with a private special education provider and such contract must include certain provisions for the board to be eligible for state reimbursement. Under the prior law, the contract must include an explanation of how tuition or costs are calculated to be eligible for state reimbursement. Section 16 of Public Act 25-93 revises the law to require private providers to explain the "tuition, rates or other fees" that they charge for the services that they provide. More significantly, the Act also requires private special education providers to follow the rate schedule established by Section 3 of Public Act 25-67 (discussed above). A private special education provider is defined as any private school or private agency or institution, including a group home, that receives, directly or indirectly, any state or local funds as a result of providing special education services to any student with an IEP or for whom an individual services plan has been written by the board of education responsible for educating such student.

Additional State Oversight of Private Special Education Providers

Sections 8 and 9 of Public Act 25-67 address new compliance requirements for private special education providers. First, the Act directs the CSDE to develop licensure standards for private special education providers in the state. Second, the Act directs the CSDE, beginning July 1, 2027, to conduct annual, unannounced, on-site visits of randomly selected sites at locations where private special education providers and RESCs are providing special education services pursuant to a contract with a board of education. The Act establishes what each site visit must entail and directs the Commissioner of Education to notify, within ten business days after the visit, the RESC or private provider in writing of the site visit findings and any required corrective actions. In turn, each RESC or private provider that receives written findings with required corrective actions must submit written proof of compliance with the corrective actions to the CSDE within 30 days of receiving the findings. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in financial penalties. The Act also prohibits boards of education from knowingly placing any additional students with a RESC or private provider that is not in compliance with these requirements.

New Competitive Grant to Support In-District Special Education Programs

Section 19 of the Public Act 25-93 establishes a new competitive grant program to support in-district or regional special education programs. Grants awarded to boards of education may be used (1) to enhance and improve existing special education programming and services in the district or start-up costs related to the creation of in-district or regional special education programming and services, and (2) for planning and operational expenses related to such in-district or regional special education programming and services. Section 17 of the Act exempts any funds awarded pursuant to the grant from inclusion in the district's minimum budget requirement (MBR) for the subsequent fiscal year.

Grant Program to Expand In-District Special Education Programming

Section 7 of Public Act 25-67 as amended by Section 317 of Public Act 25-168, establishes a new special education and expansion development (SEED) grant. Each SEED grant is paid directly to boards of education and may only be expended for special education purposes. Such purposes include the direct provision of special education and related services to students; Tier 2 interventions; academic and behavioral interventions; the hiring and salaries of special education teachers, paraeducators, and behavioral and reading specialists who work directly with students; the purchase and maintenance of equipment; and curriculum materials. The Act specifically excludes coverage for administrative functions and operating expenses, as well as special education and related services provided by a third-party contractor.

Grants are calculated in a manner similar to the Education Cost Sharing formula. Fully funded grant amounts for each town will be calculated by multiplying the (1) foundation amount (currently $11,525 per student) (2) by each town's base aid ratio (3) by the special education needs student count (which is 50% of the number of resident students enrolled in public schools at the expense of the town as of October 1 who are special education students) for the fiscal year before the year in which the grant is to be paid. The Act provides that, for fiscal year 2026 and each fiscal year thereafter, each board of education for a town maintaining public schools shall be entitled to a SEED grant in an amount equal to its fully funded grant. Processes for adjustment (including proportionate reduction if the total of the grants exceeds appropriations) and grant payment schedules are laid out in the statute.

The Act specifies that, if a board receives an increase in funds over the amount it received for the prior fiscal year, such increase shall not be used to supplant funding for special education purposes, and the budgeted appropriation for special education must be at least the amount appropriated for special education for the prior year plus such

increase in funds. The Act provides for financial penalties if a board fails to meet these requirements and/or if the board fails to use the funds solely for the purposes identified in the Act.

In addition, the Act requires grant recipients to annually submit, beginning July 15, 2026, an expenditure report summarizing and itemizing how grant funds were spent during the prior fiscal year. Such report must include whether the grant was used to hire any new special education teachers, paraeducators, or behavioral or reading specialists. Boards of education receiving grants less than $10,000 in a fiscal year are exempt from the reporting requirement for that year.

Finally, under existing law, when a town or school district receives additional state funding for education over what it received in the previous year, that increase is generally added to the town's minimum budget requirement (MBR) for education. With limited exceptions, towns are prohibited from decreasing their MBR for education from year to year, and an increase in state grant funds cannot be used to offset or decrease the town's own financial contribution to education. However, beginning with fiscal year 2026, Section 6 of the Act provides an exception that SEED grants are not required to be included in the MBR calculation for the following fiscal year. Therefore, accepting a SEED grant will not increase a municipality's MBR.

Nonapproved Facility Placement and Reimbursement

Under existing law, a PPT or a hearing officer may determine that placement at a nonapproved facility is appropriate. Section 16 of Public Act 25-93 now also allows a court to determine if such placement is appropriate. The Act also requires the PPT, hearing officer, or court to make the determination, in part, on whether there is no other provider able to offer placement for the student that provides an appropriate public education.

The Act also revises the ability for boards of education to be reimbursed for expenses incurred for a placement in a nonapproved facility. If the PPT places the student at a nonapproved facility, then the board will not be reimbursed through the state's excess cost grant or Public Act 25-67's new SEED grant. However, if a hearing officer or court places the student, then the board may be reimbursed through these two grants.

Public Directory of Special Education Programs

Section 20 of Public Act 25-93 requires the CSDE, in consultation with the Child Advocate, to develop and annually update a list of each special education program offered by RESCs, private providers of special education approved by the CSDE, and boards of education that accept out-of-district student placements. Each program listing must specify the types of services provided, the physical location where services are offered, ages served, and the approved classroom size. The CSDE must post the list on its website and send it to each board of education by January 15, 2027.

Staffing Notifications

Section 22 of Public Act 25-93 requires RESCs and private providers of special education services to notify key parties of staffing changes that affect the provision of special education services. Written notification must be sent within five business days of the staffing change to the affected student's parent or guardian, the board of education that placed the student, and the CSDE. The notice must address staffing changes such as vacancies, long-term absences, and assignments of long-term substitutes (defined as absences of ten or more consecutive school days), and must include any change in services provided by specialists, any change to student to teacher ratios, and the plan to mitigate the impact of the staffing changes on the student.

New Behavioral Health Support Services Grant

Section 26 of Public Act 25-93 establishes, beginning in fiscal year 2026, a new grant program to support boards of education in providing support services for students who require special education and have experienced trauma or have behavioral health needs. The grant will be available to each board of education that provides support services, including, but not limited to, trauma-informed care coordination and family outreach, for such students and their families in partnership with community service providers. On or before September 1, 2025, the CSDE must post the application form for the grant program on its website.

Requirements Before Changing Student Outplacement

Section 10 of Public Act 25-67 prohibits boards of education, interdistrict magnet school operators, state and local charter schools, and private providers of special education services from transferring an out-of-district special education student to any other school or facility unless (1) the sending district holds a PPT (2) the PPT finds that the transfer is more appropriate for the student's educational needs. The Act further provides that a representative of the entity that received the out-of-district student placement must be invited to attend and participate in the PPT meeting but cannot request that a PPT meeting be held for this purpose.

Reporting Special Education Placements to CSDE

Section 12 of Public Act 25-67 requires each board of education, no later than June 30, 2026 and annually thereafter, to report to the CSDE each special education student placement where the board is paying any portion of the cost. The Act lists various requirements for the report, including: (1) whether the placement resulted from a PPT decision, a settlement agreement, or a special education hearing; (2) whether the placement is with an approved or nonapproved private special education services provider, RESC, interdistrict magnet school program operator, state charter school, cooperative agreement, board of education operating an outplacement program, or part of the Open Choice Program; (3) the amount being paid by the board; (4) the special education services being provided; (5) the location of the facility where the services are being provided; and (6) the total number of agreements on special education nondisclosure or waiver of rights under the federal IDEA that the board has entered with a student, parent, or guardian during the prior school year. The Act further provides that the CSDE may request additional information to be reported.

FBAs and BIPs Prior to Outplacements Due to a Student's Challenging Behavior

Section 13 of Public Act 25-67 requires boards of education, on and after September 1, 2025, to conduct a functional behavior assessment (FBA) and develop or update a behavioral intervention plan (BIP) before placing a student in an out-of-district placement due to challenging behavior. However, a board of education is exempt from this requirement if taking the time to conduct such assessment or develop or update such plan would pose a safety risk to the student or any student or staff member at the school. In such instance, the board must file a notice with the CSDE describing the reasons for its decision not to conduct an FBA or develop or update a BIP.

The Act directs the CSDE to develop, by September 1, 2025, guidance for boards of education to determine the circumstances in which the time required to conduct an FBA and develop or update a BIP would put at risk the safety of any student or school staff.

Model Placement Contracts

Section 11 of Public Act 25-67 requires the CSDE to establish model contracts for the placement of students with approved private providers of special education services and RESCs. The CSDE must publish these model contracts by July 1, 2026.

Model Contract for Transportation Services

Section 23 of Public Act 25-93 requires the CSDE to develop a model contract for transportation services to and from special education outplacements. The CSDE must publish the model contract by July 1, 2026.

Due Process Hearings

Sections 18 and 19 of Public Act 25-67 modify the due process hearing procedures by: (1) requiring the parties to disclose, before the hearing, all the claims they will raise at the hearing (the hearing officer may bar undisclosed claims); (2) requiring hearing officers to consider all evaluations presented and used at the hearing; and (3) limiting a hearing to four days unless the hearing officer issues a written decision finding good cause to lengthen its duration. The Act also requires that hearing officers' written decisions include specific findings of fact related to the IDEA's least restrictive environment requirement, including findings determining: (1) whether the district has made reasonable efforts to accommodate the child in a regular classroom; (2) the educational benefits available to the child in a regular classroom, with appropriate supplementary aids and services, as compared to the benefits provided in a special education classroom; (3) the possible negative effects on the provision of education to other students in a classroom if the child is included in such classroom; and (4) whether the school has included the child in school programs with nondisabled students to the maximum extent appropriate.

Out-of-District Students Attending Interdistrict Public School Attendance Programs and Requiring Special Education

Under existing law, sending districts participating in the state-wide interdistrict public school attendance program must pay, subject to state reimbursement, a receiving district for the cost of special education and related services for each student they send that requires special education and related services.

Section 10 of Public Act 25-143 amends Connecticut General Statutes § 10-266aa to now require the receiving district to (1) hold the PPT meeting for each out-of-district student who requires special education and related services and invite representatives from the sending district to participate in such meeting; and (2) ensure that such students receive the services mandated in the student's IEP, whether they are provided by the sending or receiving district.

Section 10 of the Act also now requires a receiving district to (1) ensure that students with a plan pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 receive the services mandated by the student's plan, and (2) pay for the costs of providing such services to such student.

Emergency Grants to Municipalities for Special Education

Special Act 25-1 establishes a new, separate, nonlapsing account known as the "special education emergency municipal assistance account." $40 million shall be transferred to the account from the General Fund. The Commissioner of Education may use the funds in this account to award emergency grants to municipalities for

excess special education costs. The Commissioner shall award the grants consistent with the framework provided by subsections (d) and (e) of Connecticut General Statutes § 10-76g.

Special Education Transportation Route Mapping

Section 18 of Public Act 25-93 requires the CSDE to conduct a request for information (RFI) from contractors with expertise in transportation route mapping. Contractors must have the ability to either (1) create and annually update recommended coordinated bus routes for all special education students traveling to and from special education outplacements in the state or (2) provide access to software or a digital program that allows a state agency to do this. The coordinate routes must maximize efficiency and reduce the cost of providing special education and related services and comply with state and federal law. The CSDE must submit a report on the results of the RFI to the General Assembly by July 1, 2027.

New Family Guide for Special Education

Section 24 of Public Act 25-93 requires the CSDE, in consultation with the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center, to develop and annually update a special education family guide that assists parents and guardians of students receiving special education and related services in understanding the process and laws governing the provision of special education. The guide must include an explanation of (1) the allowable number of days to diagnose that a student requires special education or related services, and hold an initial PPT meeting; (2) the consequences for failure of the school district to meet the deadlines described in subdivision (1) and include the appropriate administrators at the initial and subsequent PPT processes; and (3) recourses available to parents and guardians if an in-home tutor does not attend to tutoring sessions. The CSDE must publish the guide on its website by July 1, 2026.

IEP Changes

Section 21 of Public Act 25-67 requires the CSDE, no later than January 1, 2026, to revise the state's IEP form to remove the requirement to list the individuals who will implement the IEP.

CSDE Study Analyzing Special Education Identification Demographics

Section 30 of Public Act 25-93 requires the CSDE to conduct a study concerning the disproportionate or over-identification of minority students for special education and related services. The study must include an examination of the rates of identification for special education and related services disaggregated by race and gender for each school district. By January 1, 2027, CSDE must submit a report on its findings and recommendations to the Office of the Educational Ombudsperson and the General Assembly.

Updates to the Building Educational Responsibility with Greater Improvement Networks Commission

Sections 15 through 17 of Public Act 25-67 provide various updates to the Building Educational Responsibility with Greater Improvement Networks Commission, which was established in 2023 to study issues relating to education funding, accountability, the adequacy of financial reporting, and the financial impact of certain programs on boards of education.

Section 15 of the Act directs the Commission, among other things, to: (1) conduct a needs-based study to determine if additional special education programs and services are required in the state to meet student demand; (2) develop

and recommend a new methodology for the CSDE to use when reviewing applications to become an approved private provider of special education services; (3) consider recommendations for the creation of a special education program peer review process to facilitate sharing best practices among school districts; (4) examine and make recommendations regarding the current implementation of Tier 2 interventions; (5) review and recommend changes to CT-SEDS; (6) conduct a study concerning access to respite care for families of children with disabilities; (7) develop recommendations for standards for measuring the effectiveness of the delivery of special education services by boards of education; (8) develop recommendations for a system of publicly acknowledging boards of education that meet or exceed, or fail to meet, such effectiveness standards; and (9) conduct a study to determine if certain special education services can be billed to Medicaid or private insurance.

Section 16 of the Act directs the Commissioner of Education, in consultation with the Commission, to develop a proposed state-wide special education workload analysis model for teachers and school service providers implementing a student's IEP. Such model shall set standards that limit the workload of such teachers and school service providers. The proposed model shall be available through CT-SEDS no later than September 1, 2026.

Section 17 of the Act directs the Commissioner of Education to develop a report on the functions of CT-SEDS that will explain the purpose of each field in the data system, how the data in each field is used, and how each field relates to student outcomes. The report will also identify which, if any, fields exceed the requirements of the IDEA. The Commissioner shall submit this report to the Commission and to the General Assembly.

STATUTORY CHANGES RELATED TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

Curriculum Objectives

Existing law requires boards of education to have a school district curriculum committee that recommends, develops, reviews and approves all curriculum for the district. Each board of education must make available all curriculum and associated materials approved by the committee, in accordance with the federal Protection of Pupil Rights Act and state law.

Section 219 of Public Act 25-174 amends Connecticut General Statutes § 10-220(e) to require, for the school year commencing July 1, 2026 and each school year thereafter, that each board of education post objectives and scope and sequence of approved curriculum on the board's website.

Instructional Support Partners

Section 28 of Public Act 25-93, as amended by Section 205 of Public Act 25-174, allows school boards to hire or designate a current employee to serve as an instructional support partner in each school or school building within the district beginning with the 2026-2027 school year. Under the new law, an instructional support partner is responsible for:

- reducing the administrative burden of teachers, including the administrative burden related to the IEP process, scheduling of and taking minutes during PPT team meetings, serving as a designated staff member for specialized responsibilities, and attending professional development trainings, trainings for students' individualized interventions, and testing;
- helping school-based personnel improve the delivery and administration of the IEP process;

- collaborating with parents and school-based personnel regarding instructional decision-making for students with disabilities;
- pursuing and attending, as a representative of the school, trainings and professional development on student interventions and planning and delivering professional learning activities to staff, parents and others to increase students with disabilities' achievement;
- consulting with school-based instructional staff on IEP development and writing extended school year, behavioral interventions, and transition plans for students with disabilities.

The Act requires that any individual hired or designated as an instructional support partner spend at least 50% of their time performing the duties of the position as described in the statute.

Section 29 of the Act requires the CSDE, for the school year commencing July 1, 2026, and each school year thereafter, to host, at least quarterly, trainings for persons hired or designated to serve as an instructional support partner. Such training shall include, but need not be limited to, effective literacy and math instruction, personalized learning and individualized instruction for students with disabilities, improving classroom management, effective instructional methods and behavioral supports, and transition plans for students with disabilities.

Library Policy Requirements for Boards of Education

Section 321 of Public Act 25-168 requires boards of education to adopt three policies related to school libraries: (1) a collection development and maintenance policy; (2) a library display and program policy; and (3) a library material review and reconsideration policy governing school library materials, displays, and programming. These policies must be created in consultation with the superintendent of schools, the director of curriculum, and a school librarian and reviewed and updated, as necessary, every five years. The policies must ensure that all library materials are evaluated and made accessible in accordance with state non-discrimination laws.

The Act also sets forth various and detailed requirements for each policy. Generally, the policies must recognize that library displays and materials should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all students and represent a wide range of diverging viewpoints; require student access to age-appropriate and grade-level-appropriate material; and recognize the importance of the school library as a place for voluntary inquiry, dissemination of information and ideas, and free expression.

Boards must also establish a procedure for the continuous review of library materials by a certified school library media specialist, as well as a procedure by which students and parents may challenge any library materials, display, or student program. The Act provides that such materials, displays, or programs may only be excluded for legitimate pedagogical purposes or based on professionally accepted collection maintenance practices, not because of the origin, background, or viewpoints of the creator or the origin, background, or viewpoints expressed in the material. Employees performing their duties under the Act are immune from liability resulting from their implementation of these policies.

Concurrent and Dual Enrollment Courses

Section 6 of Public Act 25-99 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 the CSDE, in partnership with institutions of higher education, to develop a model agreement between secondary schools and postsecondary institutions for the provision of dual enrollment courses, concurrent enrollment courses, and postsecondary credit courses to students in grades nine to twelve.

Section 7 of the Act defines "concurrent enrollment course" as a "postsecondary education course in any academic subject or career-oriented pathway delivered at a high school through which a high school student is simultaneously enrolled in an institution of higher education and is taught by a high school teacher approved by such institution of higher education." The Act defines "dual enrollment course" as a "postsecondary education course in any academic subject or career-oriented pathway delivered by an institution of higher education through which a high school student is simultaneously enrolled in such institution of higher education and is taught by a faculty member of such institution of higher education."

Under Section 7 of the Act, no later than July 1, 2028, each institution of higher education that currently offers concurrent enrollment course(s) must obtain accreditation for such course from the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships, unless the CSDE approves an extension of time. If an institution of higher education establishes a new concurrent enrollment course, it must obtain accreditation for such course not later than three years after establishing such course, unless the CSDE approves an extension of time.

Support for Advanced and Dual Credit Course Access

Section 309 of Public Act 25-168 requires the CSDE, beginning in fiscal year 2027 and subject to available appropriations, to establish a fee-waiver grant program to facilitate access to advanced courses or programs for high-need high school students. Boards of education may apply for reimbursement for any fees the board is charged for such students who enroll in advanced courses or dual enrollment or dual credit programs. The Act also allows the CSDE to pay up to $500,000 each fiscal year to the State Education Resource Center (SERC) for programming that will support boards of education in the articulation and expansion of dual credit courses. The SERC must prioritize alliance districts in expending any such funds.

CSDE Notification of Challenging Curriculum and Courses that Grant Postsecondary Credit

Section 5 of Public Act 25-99 amends, effective January 1, 2026, Connecticut General Statutes § 10-221x, the statute that requires boards of education to adopt a challenging curriculum policy. The Act creates a new requirement that, no later than February 1, 2026 and annually thereafter, the CSDE must notify the parents of all public school students in grades eight to eleven about opportunities to pursue a challenging curriculum and the availability of courses that grant postsecondary credit.

STATUTORY CHANGES RELATED TO GRANTS

Education Cost Sharing Grant

Under current law, the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant has a multi-year phase-in schedule of (1) incremental increases for towns that are underfunded and (2) incremental decreases, or years with no change in funding, for overfunded towns.

Section 218 of Public Act 25-174 and Section 299 of Public Act 25-168 delay the start of an existing statutory ECS schedule to phase in grant funding reductions for overfunded towns by two years. For fiscal years 2026 and 2027, overfunded districts will continue to receive the same equalization aid grant amount as the previous year. The phase-down will now begin in fiscal year 2028 and proceed according to the original schedule, with incrementally larger reductions each year until the districts reach their fully funded levels. The Act leaves unchanged existing statutory provisions that begin to fully fund underfunded towns in fiscal year 2026.

Expansion of School Security Infrastructure Grant Program to Include School Emergency Response Systems

Public Act 25-102 expands the purposes for which school security infrastructure competitive grant program funds may be used. Pursuant to state law, applicants may be reimbursed through the program for developing or improving security infrastructure; training school personnel in operating and maintaining such infrastructure; and purchasing portable entrance security devices. Under the revised law, grant funding may also be used to purchase hardware associated with emergency response communications systems and personal emergency communication devices.

High-Dosage Tutoring Matching Grant Program

Effective July 1, 2026, Section 316 of Public Act 25-168 requires the CSDE to establish and administer a competitive high-dosage tutoring matching grant program for boards of education, with the goal of accelerating student learning. "High-dosage tutoring" is defined in the Act as tutoring that contains one or more of the following elements: (1) one tutor per group of four or fewer students; (2) is provided for a minimum of three sessions per week and for at least thirty minutes per session; (3) occurs during the regular school day and is not a before or after school program or an at-home, on-demand program; (4) supplements and does not replace core academic instruction; (5) is provided in person by an in-person tutor; (6) is provided by high-quality tutors; (7) uses a high-quality curriculum and instructional materials that are aligned with academic standards and core classroom, grade-level content approved by the State Board of Education; (8) is data driven; (9) provides tutors with training and professional learning opportunities throughout the school year; and (10) requires collaboration between tutors and regular classroom educators. The tutoring match grant program will begin in fiscal year 2027, subject to available appropriations. Grants must cover a two-year period and may be awarded to any program that provides high-dosage tutoring, as defined in the Act. CSDE may use up to 3% of the funds appropriated for the program for administrative expenses, technical assistance, and program evaluation. By January 31, 2029, CSDE must submit a report to the General Assembly on the implementation and outcomes of the program.

Changes to School Security Infrastructure Grant Program Requirements

A board of education seeking reimbursement pursuant to the School Security Infrastructure Grant Program must, among other things, provide for a uniform security assessment of the schools under its jurisdiction. Section 8 of Public Act 25-157 amends the law to require that districts use the guidelines established by the Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security within the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, and not the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities' Safe Schools Facilities Checklist that was previously required.

Air Quality Improvement Grants

Existing law authorizes state bonds to fund certain school air quality improvement grants for school air quality improvements, including upgrades to, replacement of, or installation of heating, ventilation and air conditioning equipment. Section 58 of Public Act 25-174 allows these funds to be used for other school projects, such as to remedy safety and health violations and damage from fire or catastrophe. The Act also reduces the current bond authorization for funding school air quality improvement grants from $375 million to $236.5 million.

HVAC Grants

Sections 140 and 144 of Public Act 25-174 repeal the existing heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems (HVAC) grant, merging it with an existing school construction grant law that provides grants for a broader range of school building projects. The Act also subjects the new HVAC grants to the same application and eligibility criteria as for existing non-priority school building projects.

Under current law, grants may be approved for the costs to install, replace, or upgrade HVAC systems or related improvements. The Act allows the approval of grants for a school to upgrade HVAC systems or make other improvements to indoor air quality in school buildings, but does not include explicit language for the installation or replacement of HVAC systems.

The Act maintains several provisions regarding grants for HVAC or indoor air quality improvements. For example, recipients must have certified compliance with the uniform inspection and evaluation of their school buildings' HVAC systems as required by law. In addition, the following expenses are not eligible for reimbursement: (1) routine maintenance and cleaning of the HVAC system and (2) work performed at or on a public school administrative or service facility that is not located or housed within a public school building. In addition, grant recipients must be responsible for the routine maintenance and cleaning of the HVAC system and provide training to school personnel and maintenance staff concerning the system's proper use and maintenance.

Proportional Reduction of Underfunded Education Grants

State law requires certain education grants to boards of education or RESCs to be proportionately reduced if the amount appropriated does not fully fund them according to their respective statutory formulas. Sections 302 through 306 of Public Act 25-168 extend or implement this requirement for the following grants: adult education programs (extends through fiscal year 2026), health services for private school students (extends through fiscal year 2026), school transportation (applies permanently), RESC operations (extends through fiscal year 2027), and bilingual education (extends through fiscal year 2027).

Transportation Grants for RESCs

Under existing law, subject to certain conditions, boards of education (in addition to other educational entities) are eligible to receive a transportation grant for transporting students to interdistrict magnet school programs in a town other than the town in which the child resides. Typically, the amount of such grant shall not exceed an amount equal to the number of children transported multiplied by $1,300. Section 13 of Public Act 25-143 amends the law to enable RESCs located in the *Sheff* region to receive transportation grants equal to the cost of reasonable transportation services, subject to a comprehensive financial audit and documentation process and in accordance with statutory requirements.

Under prior law, the Commissioner was also permitted to provide supplemental transportation grants to RESCs for the purposes of transportation to interdistrict magnet schools. Section 13 of Public Act 25-143 eliminates the potential for supplemental grants.

Charter School Grants Priority Considerations

Existing law establishes a grant program to assist state charter schools with certain school building projects and directs the Commissioner of Education to give preference to applications that provide for matching funds from

nonstate sources. Section 147 of Public Act 25-174 requires the Commissioner to also give preference to charter school capital improvement grant applications when the school's accountability index score meets or exceeds the state-wide average accountability index score for at least two of the previous three school years.

Interdistrict Magnet School Grants

Under current law, for fiscal years 2017 through 2025, if an interdistrict magnet school will assist the state in meeting its obligations under *Sheff v. O'Neill*, the Commissioner, in approving an application for operating grant funds, must consider the criteria applicable to all applicants of interdistrict magnet schools and must also consider whether the school is meeting the reduced-isolation enrollment standards for interdistrict magnet school programs, developed by the Commissioner in accordance with state law. Section 9 of Public Act 25-143 extends this requirement indefinitely. The Act also extends other requirements regarding the award of interdistrict magnet school grants beyond fiscal year 2025. Among other things, the Act extends the statutory provision establishing that, for the purposes of equalization aid, a student enrolled in an interdistrict magnet school program shall be counted as a resident student of the town in which the student resides.

Permanent Extension of Choice Program Grants and New Grant Formula for Magnet Schools

Sections 307 and 308 of Public Act 25-168 make permanent the choice program grants for interdistrict magnet schools and regional vo-ag centers. These grants, previously scheduled to expire at the end of fiscal year 2025, will now continue for each fiscal year thereafter. The Act also adds a method to determine grants for newly established magnet schools that begin operating on or after July 1, 2024. These new schools will receive the per-student grant amount assigned to existing magnet school operators in the same region, as determined by the Commissioner of Education.

Revised Magnet School Transportation Grant Calculations and Payment Schedule

Section 312 of Public Act 25-168 revises the calculation and payment schedule for magnet school transportation grants, with significant changes affecting *Sheff* magnet schools Under prior law, *Sheff* magnet schools received a transportation grant of $2,000 per pupil, with additional supplemental grants available to RESCs subject to appropriations, as provided in Connecticut General Statutes § 10-264i. Beginning in fiscal year 2026, the per pupil grant and supplemental grant process for *Sheff* schools are eliminated. *Sheff* magnet transportation grants will instead be based on the actual cost of reasonable transportation services, subject to a comprehensive financial review conducted by an auditor selected by the Commissioner of Education. Up to 95% of each *Sheff* magnet school transportation grant must now be paid before June 30 of the fiscal year, with the remainder due by March 1 of the following fiscal year upon completion of the required review. Up to 50% of the estimated transportation costs must also be paid by October 31 of the fiscal year. For other magnet schools receiving transportation grants, half of their estimated eligible transportation costs must be paid by October 31, with the remainder paid by May 31. Previously, those payments were required by statute to be made in October and May.

STATUTORY CHANGES RELATED TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Administration of Epinephrine and Glucagon

Section 20 of Public Act 25-143 makes changes to the statute governing the administration of epinephrine and glucagon in the early childhood setting. Specifically, the Act revises the directive that regulations adopted by the Commissioner of Early Childhood specify that a child care center or group child care home shall not deny services to a child on the basis of a child's known or suspected allergy or because a child has a prescription for an automatic

prefilled cartridge injector or similar automatic injectable equipment, nasal spray or any other medical equipment approved by the FDA that is used to treat an allergic reaction, or for injectable equipment, nasal spray or any other medical equipment approved by FDA that is used to administer glucagon.

Definition of OEC Funded Early Care and Education Program

Prior law defined "Office of Early Childhood [OEC] funded early care and education program" to mean a program that accepts state funds directly from the OEC or indirectly through OEC subcontractors for "any combination of infant, toddler, preschool and before and after school." Section 1 of Public Act 25-143 revises this definition to include "any combination of infant, toddler, and preschool, and any before or after school program for infant, toddler, and preschool-age children." As under prior law, childcare subsidy programs are excluded from the definition.

Designated Qualified Staff Member Requirements

Existing law requires primary classroom teachers at OEC-funded early childhood education programs to meet certain education requirements that phase in from July 1, 2025, to July 1, 2030, with increasing percentages of staff needing to meet certain eligibility requirements over time. It also specifies the degrees or credentials required for these teachers to qualify as "designated qualified staff members," who are those staff members assigned primary responsibility for a classroom of children in an early care and education program. A teacher may qualify as a designated qualified staff member at a bachelor's degree level or an associate's degree level. Section 1 of the Public Act 25-143 modifies designated qualified staff member education and supervision requirements as described below.

Bachelor's Degree-Designated Staff

Under existing law, a person may qualify as a bachelor's degree-designated staff member in a number of ways, including having a bachelor's degree with a concentration in early childhood education. An individual can also qualify as a bachelor's degree-designated staff member, with OEC permission, if that person is enrolled in an institution of higher education and engaged and making progress in an early childhood planned program of study leading to an early childhood bachelor's degree. Section 1 of the Act now requires the staff member to also be supervised by an on-site staff teacher or administrator who has a bachelor's degree or higher with an early childhood education concentration.

Associate's Degree-Designated Staff

Under existing law, an associate's-degree designated qualified staff member meeting certain requirements may generally be deemed a designated qualified staff member if supervised on-site by a bachelor's degree-designated staff member. Pursuant to the Act, these qualified staff members must now be supervised by an on-site teacher or administrator with a bachelor's degree or higher with a concentration in early childhood education.

Section 1 of the Act also eliminates the option for a bachelor's degree-designated qualified staff member to supervise an associate's degree-designated staff member off-site, unless the associate's degree-designated staff member works at a family child care home and (1) is working toward an early childhood associate's degree or higher and (2) the supervisor meets the requirements for a bachelor's degree-designated qualified staff member and provides coaching at the family child care home.

Phase-In Requirements

Existing law phases in the requirement for designated qualified staff at OEC-funded early care and education programs from July 1, 2025 to July 1, 2030, requiring a higher percentage of designated staff over time. On and

after July 1, 2030, at least 60% of the designated qualified staff members at each OEC-funded childcare program must be a bachelor's level designated qualified staff member.

However, if the program is a family child care home, the designated qualified staff member for such family child care home must have achieved or be working toward an early childhood associate's degree or higher. The Act now requires that on or after July 1, 2035, the designated qualified staff members for such family child care homes must hold an early childhood associate degree or higher.

Early Start CT

Last year, Public Act 24-78 established Early Start CT and required OEC to operate and administer the program to (1) provide state funding to early care and education programs throughout the state and (2) coordinate and facilitate the efficient delivery of such early care and education programs for eligible children. Pursuant to state law, OEC has numerous program-related responsibilities, including establishing a sliding fee scale based on family income for families that are enrolled in an early care and education program under Early Start CT. In addition, a town or school district may establish a local governance partner and two or more towns or school districts may establish a regional governance partner to assist in the provision of early care and education in a community under Early Start CT.

Sections 6 through 8 of Public Act 25-143 make various changes to Early Start CT's local and regional governance partnerships, sliding fee scale, and state allocation, as follows:

- ***Local and regional governance partnerships.*** Prior law required local or regional governance partners, within available appropriations, to help provide early care and education in a community under Early Start CT. Section 6 of Public Act 25-143 now allows only one partner to do so within a community.

- ***Sliding fee scale.*** Section 7 of the Act extends, from July 1, 2025, to July 1, 2027, the date by which OEC must establish a sliding fee scale for families enrolled in an early care and education program under Early Start CT.

- ***State allocation.*** Under prior law, OEC was permitted to allocate up to 10% of the total financial assistance under its contract with each local or regional governance partner for coordination, program evaluation, and administration, provided such amount did not exceed $150,000. Section 8 of the Act increases this amount to $350,000.

Changes to Early Childhood Facilities Grant Program

Section 313 of Public Act 25-168 adds Early Start CT to and removes Even Start from the list of programs eligible for bond funding for certain grants administered by the OEC. Grants awarded through this program must be used for facilities improvements and minor capital repairs, as described in Connecticut General Statutes § 10-508. The maximum grant amount has also been increased from $75,000 to $100,000 per classroom.

MISCELLANEOUS STATUTORY CHANGES

Indoor Air Quality Inspections

Under existing law, boards of education must conduct a uniform inspection and evaluation of each of their schools' HVAC systems for the time period beginning July 1, 2026 and ending June 30, 2031. Section 148 of Public Act 25-174

retroactively expands this window to begin July 1, 2022. Therefore, inspections performed between July 1, 2022, and July 1, 2026 can now satisfy the requirement. The law also clarifies that, during such period, each board of education shall provide such inspection for at least 20% of the schools under its jurisdiction on or before June 30, 2027 and in each subsequent year until each school has been inspected. Each such school must also be inspected every five years after the date of its last inspection.

The Department of Administrative Services may, upon request, grant a waiver, up to one year, of these provisions if it finds that (i) there is an insufficient number of certified testing, adjusting and balancing technicians, certified industrial hygienists, or mechanical engineers to perform such inspection and evaluation, or (ii) the board has scheduled such inspection and evaluation for a date in the subsequent year.

Bonus Reimbursement Rates for Elementary School Construction Projects

Under current law, the state provides a 15-percentage-point reimbursement rate increase for new or expanded elementary school construction projects that include space for an early childhood care and education program that provides services for children from birth to age five. Under prior law, this increase applied only to the portion of the building used primarily for such program. Sections 142 and 143 of Public Act 25-174 apply the 15-percentage point reimbursement bonus to the cost of the entire school building project.

The Act also establishes a new 15-percentage point reimbursement rate bonus for new buildings or renovation or expansion of existing buildings, which buildings are used to provide general education for non-special education students, if they include plans for the expansion or creation of in-district special education programming and services. The bonus reimbursement rate applies only to the portion of the building project used primarily for such purpose. The Act also requires that any additional funding received resulting from and related to the inclusion of special education programming shall be expended for the construction or renovation or expansion project.

The bonus rate cannot cause a school building project's total reimbursement rate to exceed 100%.

Tuition Cap Calculation for New Magnet and Preschool Programs

Sections 318 through 320 of Public Act 25-168 establish a new methodology for calculating tuition rates for magnet schools that began operating on or after July 1, 2024. Under existing law, magnet school operators charge tuition to the school districts that send students to their school. Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes § 10-264l, that tuition is capped at 58% of the amount that was charged in fiscal year 2024. Schools that were not in operation during that year have no basis for making that calculation. To address this, the Act provides that these magnet programs may not charge tuition exceeding the per student average tuition charged by magnet school programs serving similar grade ranges in the same region, as determined by the Commissioner of Education. This tuition setting method will also apply to preschool programs that began operating on or after July 1, 2024.

CTECS Cooperative Agreements

Under current law, the executive director of the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) may enter into cooperative agreements with boards of education, private career schools, institutions of higher education, job training agencies, and employers in order to provide (1) general education; (2) vocational, technical, technological or postsecondary education; and (3) work experience. Section 18 of Public Act 25-143 expands the list of entities with whom such cooperative agreements can be made to include nonprofit career schools and a nonprofit training institute in the state that provides training in the building trades to underserved populations.

Prohibition of Bail Bondsman Apprehending Individual on School Premises

Section 1 of Public Act 25-25 prohibits a professional bondsman, surety bond agent, or bail enforcement agent from taking or attempting to take into custody an individual on a bond on the premises, grounds, or campus of any public or private school or institution of higher education (as well as other grounds identified by the Act).

Annual Reporting on Attendance Review Teams

Under existing law, school districts with high chronic absenteeism rates must establish attendance review teams to review cases of truant and chronically absent students, consider school-based interventions and community referrals, and make recommendations for students and their families. Section 247 of Public Act 25-168 requires the CSDE, not later than February 1, 2026, to submit an annual report to the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC) on school districts with attendance review teams. The report must include the specific efforts and outcomes of attendance review teams in alliance districts, as reported in each district's alliance district plan; and any effective practices used by attendance review teams to reduce chronic absenteeism.

Phase-Out of the Commissioner's Network of Schools

Sections 41 and 42 of Public Act 25-93 and Section 4 of Public Act 25-175 phase out the Commissioner of Education's network of schools, a program established under Connecticut General Statutes § 10-223h to improve academic achievement in low-performing schools, with an end date of June 30, 2027. The Commissioner may not add any more schools to the program after July 1, 2025, and may not extend the time that already participating schools can stay in the program. Schools already in the program are allowed to finish their three-year terms.

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