

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-7217

AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION

Title: STATUTES.

Vote Date: 3/24/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/19/2025

File No.: 648

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill updates school budgeting, student health, discipline, and staffing rules. It makes schools more transparent by requiring detailed budget histories, strengthens student health and safety measures, updates rules for school resource officers, and changes how young children are disciplined. It also improves communication with parents and gives more flexibility in spending and purchasing for schools. These changes improve accountability in school spending, support student health and safety, protect young children from overly harsh discipline, and ensure better communication with families. Overall, it helps schools operate more fairly, efficiently, and transparently.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute eliminates language requiring sharing documentation of pre-violence indicators between SROs and school safety committees and adds language requiring MOUs regarding SROs to be updated every three years.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Charlene Russell-Tucker, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Education](#): supports many parts of the bill, including those that ease burdens on school nurses, expand student health services, and give schools more financial flexibility. She raises concerns about added reporting requirements for superintendents and opposes reducing suspension limits, citing the need for more time to assess recent changes. Overall, she urges a balance between new mandates and local control.

[Christina Ghio, Acting Child Advocate, Office of The Child Advocate](#): supports sections 13 and 14 of the bill, emphasizing that suspensions harm children and that schools should focus on supportive interventions. She also backs the provision ensuring alternative education for twice-expelled students. However, she raises concerns about the vague terms in section 5 and urges clearer boundaries for school resource officers, stressing that discipline should remain with educators.

[Colleen Murphy, Executive Director, Freedom of Information Commission \(FOI\)](#) : is in opposition of this bill and states that section 6 of the bill which would permit superintendents to attend closed executive sessions of board of education meetings upon invitation from the board would set a precedent in which other town leaders such as police chiefs or town managers would ask for the same treatment.

[Thomas Nuccio \(TJ\), Children's Policy Analyst, The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity \(CWCSEO\)](#): is in support of this bill and states that the section, regarding reducing the maximum amount of days a student can be suspended, is a step in the right direction for student suspensions, but also expresses that schools need to take a more holistic approach and encourages schools to improve their overall climate and culture to reduce behavioral problems.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Sasha Davis, Policy Analyst, School and State Finance Project](#): expresses support for the bill, specifically the language that she states would increase transparency for school budgets especially with the potential closure of the United States Department of Education. She also offers potential amendments to the bill to further promote transparency.

[Kate Dias, President, Connecticut Education Association \(CEA\)](#): supports this bill, particularly the language that requires better reporting on budgeted vs spending amounts. This would be applicable to all public school spending and would help to ensure that funding was spent accurately. They urge passage of the bill.

[Joslyn DeLancey, Vice President, Connecticut Education Association](#): expresses support for the bill. She states that this bill needs better accountability on spending which will help to ensure that investment promises are being kept. Additionally, this would help to make sure that the funds that schools are receiving supports teaching and learning.

[Maryellen Donnelly, Board of Education Member, Hampton CT](#): states support for the provision in the bill that allows superintendents to be invited to a board of education executive session by the board. She states that this expansion of existing statute will allow for better communication and decision making between the board and the superintendent along with the better implementation of board policies.

[Andrew Feinstein, Legislative Chair, SEEK](#): is in support of this bill and focuses on sec. 5 about contracts between school resource officers and school districts and the provisions regarding reducing the maximum number of days a student can be suspended along with

providing educational services to expelled students. He states support for sec. 5 only if the section is strengthened in a variety of ways, which he explains in his testimony.

[Paula Feyerharm, President, Association of School Nurses Connecticut](#): is in support of this bill. She states that Association of School Nurses Connecticut supports sections 4 and 12 with amended language.

[Paula Feyerharm, School Nurse, Tolland Public Schools](#): is in support of this bill but expresses concerns about physical assessment form submissions. She states that she wishes updated language to allow for school nurses to deny incomplete forms. She adds that this will streamline the process and ensure accuracy while not over burdening school nurses or families. She is opposed to the proposed language in section 8, subsection (a) because she believes a school nurse may misconstrue it.

[Greg Florio, Executive Director, CREC](#): is in support of this bill. He specifically states his support for section 9 of the bill about orders and contracts for school building construction receiving state assistance.

[Cara Hart, Cooperative Purchasing Manager, CREC](#): is in support of this bill, specifically section 9 regarding schools being able to use cooperative purchasing contracts. She states that this legislation will impact 169 municipalities by reducing costs and eliminating bidding redundancies. Additionally, the integrity of the bidding process will remain, which will benefit the local taxpayers and students.

[Jeff Jennings, Pediatrician](#): supports this bill and states that having more standardized school health forms decreases the burden for everyone involved.

[Stephanie Lesnik, Director of Nursing Services, Madison Public Schools](#): is in strong support of this bill, specifically section 4 regarding uniform and consistent use of State of Connecticut Health Assessment Record across all K-12 schools in Connecticut. She states that streamlining documentation like this eases the burden and confusion for school nurses. She adds that it also results in better healthcare outcomes and plans for the children.

[John Lopez](#): John Lopez is in support of this bill. He states that he wants to guarantee his children a good future. He states the time is now to act in anyway to help improve children's studies.

[Kathryn Scheinberg Meyer, Director of the Medical-Legal Partnership Program at the Yale Child Study Center, Center for Children's Advocacy](#): is in support of this bill and states specific support for sec. 12 about school suspensions and sec. 13 about 16–18-year-olds who have been expelled.

[Robert Nolfo, Pediatrician, Guilford Pediatrics](#): is in support of this bill and states that this bill allows for nurses to better streamline their work and that the argument made by health providers or organizations about being overburdened should not sway the vote because these forms have already existed for decades and that being unwilling to upgrade existing electronics to be able to fill these forms out is not an excuse.

[Jonathan Stein, Pediatrician, Guilford Pediatrics](#): is in support of this bill and advocates for the unified forms that will aid in the nurses complex and often difficult job.

[Sara Parker McKernan, Legislative Policy Advocate, New Haven Legal Assistance](#): is in support of this bill and states that this legislation should be passed because it fixes the existing state statute that offers alternative education to CT teens who have been expelled twice. She adds that current statute only allows for students under 16 who have been expelled twice to be offered alternative education.

[Lon Seidman, Vice President, Government Relations for the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education](#): Lon Seidman is in support of this bill, specifically section 6 allowing superintendents to be invited to executive sessions by the board of education. He says that Boards of Education value the expertise of their superintendents.

[Anonymous](#): They are in support of this bill and states that better resource allocation is needed to support communities.

[Caroline Barron](#): Caroline Barron is in support of this bill and states that this bill provides rights, protections, and support to students. She states that this bill will help students be able to thrive in school.

[Henry Mead, Student, Wilbur Cross High School](#): states support for additional funding to the New Haven Public School district for repairs, the removal of health hazards such as mold, and for classroom supplies.

[Lisandra Montalvo](#): supports for additional resources to be allocated to Bridgeport Public Schools for more teachers and more educational supplies to improve the education of her children and the other children of Bridgeport.

[Lisa Russo, Literacy Coach, Derby Middle School](#): supports this bill as it seeks to increase retirement benefits for full time service in alliance districts. She states that this will help recruit and retain high quality educators and provide students with a better educational experience.

[Rachel Turner, Special education Teacher](#): states support for additional funding for city school districts. She states an increase would provide a more equal and fair education. She states that additional funds would engage more students and contribute to a decrease in crime rate.

[Anonymous](#): States support for an increase in funding for Bridgeport Public Schools.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed

Reported by: Nicholas D'Angelo

Date: [Type Date]

