

Education Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-7219

AN ACT PROTECTING 504 PLAN ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS IN

Title: CONNECTICUT.

Vote Date: 3/28/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/19/2025

File No.: 707

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The purpose of the bill is to codify the federal protections currently afforded to students with disabilities, under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, into Connecticut state law, ensuring these students who do not qualify for special services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) still receive equal access to public education, should Section 504 be deemed unconstitutional at the Federal level in the face of pending legal challenges from multiple states.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute introduces several primarily minor, technical, and conforming revisions, including: (1) updating terminology (e.g., replacing outdated terms with "disability"); (2) removing elements that are either irrelevant to students or unnecessary under state law, such as requirements tied to federal grant assurances or one-time mandates like the initial self-evaluation under Section 504; and (3) clarifying certain compliance procedures.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Office of the Child Advocate, Acting Child Advocate, Christina Ghio](#), supports this bill because, it will protect students with disabilities in the state who need accommodations but may not qualify under IDEA. With Section 504 facing federal legal challenges, and reduced federal Office of Civil Rights staffing, the OCA says state-level support is needed. They

suggest the bill should also include USD1 (Dept. of Correction) and USD2 (Dept. of Children and Families) explicitly in the bill's definition of "program or activity" to avoid ambiguity, as both presently fall under existing education statutes. They also suggest shifting the responsibility for procedural safeguards and hearings from local districts to the State Dept. of Education to avoid conflicts of interest when districts are accused of violations.

[Connecticut Department of Education, Commissioner, Charlene Tucker](#), supports Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 fully, however they do not believe it is appropriate to transfer those responsibilities onto the state without additional resources. Specifically, they say if passed, the Dept. would need an additional office to pursue and investigate these matters, which would require at least two full time staff above what is provided for in the Governor's budget. Additionally pursuant to the Perez v. Sturgis case, they say Section 504 complaints can lead to monetary damages being awarded and the Dept. should not play a role in investigations that could lead to monetary damages, in addition to the fact that the protections and accommodations provided for in this proposal are in large part already available under federal and state special education law and would blur the distinctions between special education and Section 504 accommodations. Lastly, they note the term handicapped is used in the proposal, say it is outdated and should be revised with "disabled" or "student with a disability".

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[The Social Learning Center LLC, Director and Owner, Dr. Chris Abildgaard](#), supports this bill because, they are a doctor with years of experience helping persons with neurodevelopmental disorders, and they say section 504 accommodations have significantly enhanced students' educational experiences and they say that must be protected.

[Tanya Aldrich](#), supports this bill because, they are the parent of an autistic child who has had a 504 plan since pre-school and they say the 504 plan ensures that children have the right to free education and allows them to develop just the same as their neurotypical peers, and they hope the legislation ensures the 504 plan is codified at the state level, in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional.

[Maureen Asiel](#), supports this bill because, they agree with codifying 504 plans at the state level, because they have seen the benefits of the program firsthand and say it is crucial we support our children with accommodations.

[Jocelyn Ault](#), supports this bill because, they say it would protect the nearly 33, 000 students in Connecticut who have a 504 plan, nearly 7% of all state students, and ensure they have access to the services they need to excel alongside their peers.

[New Haven Resident, Lauren Averitt](#), supports this bill because, they say it would protect the nearly 33, 000 students in Connecticut who have a 504 plan, nearly 7% of all state students, and ensure they have access to the services they need to excel alongside their peers.

[Rachel Axier](#), supports this bill because, they are a parent of two boys with a variety of needs. They say the 504 programs has enabled their children to overcome many challenges, and the support protecting the program at the state level as well as IEPs.

[Resident of Bridgeport, Sauda Baraka](#), supports this bill because, they say it would protect the nearly 33, 000 students in Connecticut who have a 504 plan, nearly 7% of all state students, and ensure they have access to the services they need to excel alongside their peers.

[Caroline Barron](#), supports this bill because, they are a parent and teacher who has seen firsthand how programs like 504 have helped children thrive with the proper support. They fear if the program is federally deemed unconstitutional and not codified at the state level, their children's disabilities may preclude them from having the same quality of education as their peers.

[Educational Surrogate, Joseph Behuniak](#), supports this bill because, through their profession, they firsthand seen the benefits of the 504 program to help some students graduate when they otherwise may not have, and feel 504 must be codified at the state level and protected.

[Private Attorney, Lawrence Berliner](#), supports this bill because, and has multiple recommendations for the committee. They say section one should be revised to change the term handicapped student to student with a disability.

[Denise Best](#), supports this bill because, they say it would protect the nearly 33, 000 students in Connecticut who have a 504 plan (nearly 7% of all state students), should the plan be deemed unconstitutional at the federal level, and ensure they have access to the services they need to excel alongside their peers.

[Hamden Tenant Union, President, Paul Boudreau](#), supports this bill because, they are the parent of a multiple children that relied on the assistance of 504 plans to succeed in school and they say this bill will ensure the protections of Section 504 remain in place, regardless of what happens at the federal level.

[Mrs. Olivia Bugaj](#), supports this bill because, they are the parent of a child that relies on the assistance of 504 plans to succeed in school and they say this bill will ensure the protections of Section 504 remain in place, regardless of what happens at the federal level.

[Naturopathic Physician, Dr. Ashley Burkman](#), supports this bill because, they are the parent of a child that relies on the assistance of 504 plans to succeed in school and they say this bill will ensure the protections of Section 504 remain in place, regardless of what happens at the federal level. They specifically cite the following accommodations as being necessary for the success of their child, who has congenital muscular dystrophy – access to assistive technology, access to a paraprofessional for assistance with toileting and feeding, classroom accommodations, slander, and tomato seat.

[Parent, Amy Burlingame](#), supports this bill because, they are the parent of a child that relies on the assistance of 504 plans to succeed in school and they say this bill will ensure the protections of Section 504 remain in place, regardless of what happens at the federal level. Their child previously was on a special education IEP program but came off it, in part knowing they would still receive 504 plan accommodations. Without such accommodations, it would be very difficult they say for their child to effectively advocate form themselves in the classroom and to learn.

[NAMI Connecticut Inc, Public Policy Manager, Thomas Burr](#), supports this bill because, it will codify section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 at the state level and add an enforcement provision.

[Connecticut Voices for Children, Emily Bryne](#), supports this bill because, in a 2021 report, they found that between 2007 and 2019 CT's student general population decreased by 47,000 students or about 8%. At the same time, enrollment of children with special needs increased by 23%. They say passage of this bill will protect Connecticut's students, should Section 504 be deemed unconstitutional at the federal level.

[Danbury Collective, Member, Jaqueline Cabrera](#), supports this bill because, they say it would protect the nearly 33, 000 students in Connecticut who have a 504 plan (nearly 7% of all state students), should the plan be deemed unconstitutional at the federal level, and ensure they have access to the services they need to excel alongside their peers.

[CT Cradle to Career Coalition, Policy Civic Engagement Director, Kathleen Callahan](#), supports this bill because, they say it would protect the nearly 33, 000 students in Connecticut who have a 504 plan, should the plan be deemed unconstitutional at the federal level, and ensure they have access to the services they need to excel alongside their peers.

[Corine Canoza](#), supports this bill because, they have two children that use a 504 in school and they could not imagine them being as academically successful as they have been without the help of the program, and they consider the program vital for our schools.

[Danbury Public Schools, Superintendent, Kara Casimiro](#), supports this bill because, they say it would protect the nearly 33, 000 students in Connecticut who have a 504 plan, should the plan be deemed unconstitutional at the federal level, and ensure they have access to the services they need to excel alongside their peers.

[Out Accountability Project, Melissa Combs](#), supports this bill because, they say it would protect the students in Connecticut who have a 504 plan, should the plan be deemed unconstitutional at the federal level, and ensure they have access to the services they need to excel alongside their peers. They highlight the important role 504 plans play for students waiting on evaluations for IEPs who don't qualify under IDEA. They also urge the committee to consider amending the bill by removing a conflict of interest by not allowing local districts to oversee hearings for 504-related complaints, avoid giving enforcement to the State Bureau of Special Education due to what they say have been poor track records with deadlines and bias toward districts, and to strengthen accountability and enforcement mechanisms. They also cite bullying as a common root cause of some student disability diagnoses and ask for future legislative review of the state's safe school climate laws.

[Elizabeth Costen](#), supports this bill because, they are a parent and a teacher, and in their profession, they have had students utilize 504 accommodations, and say the services provided by 504 are critical to the academic success and personal well-being of many students. They also say 504 enables access to accommodations for life in a manner that IEP's and special education, do not.

[Christine Creter](#), supports this bill because, they are the parent of a child that relies on the assistance of 504 plans to succeed in school and they say this bill will ensure the protections of Section 504 remain in place, regardless of what happens at the federal level. They also

cite the various benefits having these plans remain in schools at the state level would have, including, legal protection and compliance, increased student academic success, better classroom management and teacher support, stronger school-parent relationships, and early intervention and prevention of future challenges for students in need.

[Vanessa Darmofal](#), supports this bill because, they have a child that has received support via the 504 plans, and say it is vital to support our students.

[PATH CT and SCSU, Assistant Professor, Zara DeLuca](#), supports this bill because, they are the sibling of a person whose ability to be supported and integrated into the community is enabled by Section 504, and should the provision be federally lost, they feel its vital the programs remain at the state level.

[Resident of Hamden, Allison Dickin](#), supports this bill because, they say it would protect the nearly 33, 000 students in Connecticut who have a 504 plan, should the plan be deemed unconstitutional at the federal level, and ensure they have access to the services they need to excel alongside their peers.

[Advocate, Patricia Donovan](#), supports this bill, citing the lack of uniformity across the state in how Section 504 is applied, impacting students with disabilities who do not qualify under IDEA but still need support. They also say the Connecticut State Dept. of Education primarily focuses on IDEA-qualified students, leaving Section 504 students lacking in support. They also say OCR complaints are lengthy and burdensome, often taking years to resolve. Additionally, they say while the CSDE claims Section 504 is a federal matter, because they state receives federal education funds, the state has a responsibility to ensure compliance, training and enforcement at the state level. They agree with the bills purpose to codify Section 504 into state law, and also advise the bill to be amended by requiring state-level tracking of Section 504 students, mandating annual training for 504 coordinators and special education directors, create a timely and impartial complaint resolution system at the state level similar to programs in Massachusetts and other states, and lastly, by acknowledging expanded definitions of disability (in step with 2008 ADA amendments) and ensuring schools are adapting accordingly.

[Marsha Elbourne](#), supports this bill because, they emphasize the need to safeguard our students with disabilities who do not qualify under IDEA but are assisted by Section 504. They further advocate for additional staff training and enforcement mechanisms similar to those provided under IDEA.

[Sarah Evans](#), supports this bill because, they say it would protect the nearly 33, 000 students in Connecticut who have a 504 plan, should the plan be deemed unconstitutional at the federal level, and ensure they have access to the services they need to excel alongside their peers.

[Guildford Special Ed. PTO, Kristy Faulkner](#), supports this bill because, they say it is crucial to ensure this states' students who are most in need, continue to receive the proper services they require to receive an education and to excel in school.

[SEEK, Legislative Chair, Andrew Feinstein](#), supports this bill because, they stress that Section 504 serves a broader student population than the IDEA, and protects many students who do not qualify for special education but still require support, and considering pending

federal litigation challenging section 504, they deem enshrining it at the state level is crucial. They do ask the legislature to also establish either a private right of action in Superior Court with no administrative exhaustion requirement, or a requirement that 504 complaints use the same due process system as IDEA cases. Additionally, they suggest reforming CHRO to handle 504 complaints, while opposing giving that responsibility to the State Department of Education's Bureau of Special Education.

[Resident of Hamden, Jill Feldman](#), supports this bill because, they say the 504 plan needs to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by the 504 plan to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[Kelliann Festa](#), supports this bill because, they are the parent of a child who benefits from the services of a 504 plan, and say the 504 plans are crucial to helping both their child, and other children that need special assistance, to both enjoy and excel in school. They say in light of pending federal litigation, it is crucial we codify the provisions of Section 504 at the state level to support our students in need.

[New Haven Resident, Erica Fine](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans and services need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional in the face of legal challenges. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by the 504 plan to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[Julie Fleming](#), supports this bill because, they say the 504 plan needs to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is federally deemed unconstitutional. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by the 504 plan to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[Treasurer, Connecticut School Counselor Association, Kiley Flynn](#), supports this bill because, due to pending federal legal challenges regarding the constitutionality of Section 504, the 504 plans and services need to be codified into Connecticut state law. However, they encourage the committee to amend the bill to address workload distribution, data transparency and proper role definitions, advocating for clear guidelines that prevent school counselors from becoming the default 504 plan coordinators. They also recommend requiring public data reporting by district and school, establishing a working group and defining more appropriate roles for school counselors.

[Lourdes Fonseca](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans and services need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional in the face of legal challenges. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by the 504 plan to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[North Haven DTC, Chair, Timothy Gabriele](#), supports this bill because, they are the parent of a child that benefits from 504 plan assistance, and they say 504 plans and services need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed

federally unconstitutional in the face of legal challenges. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by the 504 plan to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[Jillian Griswold](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans and services need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional in the face of legal challenges. As an attorney, they have exclusively represented children with disabilities in the state over the course of seventeen years. To prevent discrimination, they also suggest creating a private right of action in Connecticut Superior Court providing that no administrative exhaustion is required, and that complaints under Section 504 do not require the same due process impartial hearing system as complaints under the IDEA. Alternatively, they suggest amending the law to require the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities to receive, investigate, and act on complaints within 45 days of filing, and mandate that CHRO keep a log of all complaints and publish all decisions, after redacting personally identifiable information.

[Jenna Guja](#), supports this bill because, they are the parent of a child that relies on the assistance the 504 plan to succeed in school.

[Ashley Gulyas](#), supports this bill because, they say that 504 plans needs to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional. They cite how important the plan is for making many Connecticut students able to exceed in school, as many students who presently qualify for 504 assistance, do not qualify for an IEP.

[Patricia Hamlin](#), supports this bill because, they are a parent and aunt of multiple children who have been assisted via 504 programs and feels it's crucial to support these programs at the state level if needed.

[ACES, Kristine Marino-Hartmann, M.S., BCBA, LBA](#), supports this bill because, they are a Licensed Behavior Analyst with 25 years of experience working with students with disabilities, and say passing this law would be a key step toward ensuring our students who need extra assistance do not experience increased discrimination as federal protections are lost.

[School and State Finance Project, Director of Community Engagement, Erika Haynes](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans and services need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional in the face of legal challenges. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by the 504 plan to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential. They also emphasize that many students supported by a 504 plan, do not qualify for an IEP under IDEA.

[Molly Haynes](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans needs to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by the 504 plan to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[ConnCAN, Executive Director, Steven Hernandez](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans and services need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event

Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional in the face of legal challenges. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by the 504 plan to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[Christina Ilardi](#), supports this bill because, they are the parent of two children that rely on the assistance the 504 plan makes possible to keep up in school. They say 504 plans need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional.

[Marilina Imperati](#), supports this bill because, they say the 504 plan needs to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by the 504 plan to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[Richard Jannelli](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by the 504 plan to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[Lynn Katz](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans and services need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional in the face of legal challenges. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by the 504 plan to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[Adam Knapp](#), supports this bill.

[Mother, Jamie Krzmarzick](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional.

[Hamden Resident, Melissa Langdon](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by the 504 plan to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[Elizabeth Lebi](#), supports this bill because, they are the parent of two children that rely on the assistance the 504 plan makes possible to keep up in school.

[John Lopez](#), submitted testimony in support of this bill in Spanish.

[LMFT and Parent, Rebecca Martorella](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional.

[Rashanda McCollum](#), supports this bill because they say 504 plans need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally

unconstitutional. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by the 504 plan to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[Mrs. Tara Mele](#), supports this bill because, they say our students that need accommodations should not have any benefits cut.

[Yale New Haven Health Medical-Legal Partnership Project for Center for Children's Advocacy, Director, Sarah Mervine](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans and services need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional in the face of legal challenges. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by the 504 plan to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential. They also urge the legislature to go further and codify proper enforcement mechanisms for these protections in this statute, in line with the testimony provided by SEEK.

[Norwich Tech, Director of Counseling, Virginia Messina](#), supports this bill because, [Parent, Jonathan Metcalf](#), supports this bill because, believe codifying the 504 plans at the state level, if needed, is necessary to properly support the educational needs of the children in our state.

[Lisandra Montalvo](#), supports this bill because, they are a mother, and a resident of Bridgeport, and believe codifying Section 504 at the state level, if needed, is necessary to properly support the educational needs of the children in our state.

[Goviana Morales](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by the 504 plan to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[Make the Road CT, Member, and Connecticut for All Coalition, Member, Maria Morocho](#), supports this bill because, they are a mother of four children in Bridgeport, three of which are in special education programs, and this bill would ensure their children who benefit from 504 programs, will continue to receive the accommodations and services they need.

[Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity, Children's Policy Analyst, TJ Nuccio](#), supports this bill because, it will protect the rights of students with disabilities considering pending federal litigation that may impact the constitutionality of Section 504, and the CWCSEO would like to emphasize the importance of codifying section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 into Connecticut state law as a result.

[Sara Nuland](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by the 504 plan to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[Ilana Ofgang](#), supports this bill because, they are a parent, Bridgeport resident, and staff attorney at the Center for Children's Advocacy. They say 504 plans and services need to be

protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional in the face of legal challenges. They say students with disabilities in Connecticut critically need the special assistance provided by the 504 plan to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[Wethersfield Resident, Iris Ortiz Sanchez](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans and services need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional in the face of legal challenges. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by the 504 plan to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[Make the Road CT, Betzaida Souchet Ortiz](#), supports this bill because, they are the parent of a child who benefits from the services of a 504 plan, and say the 504 plans are crucial to helping both their child, and other children that need special assistance, to both enjoy and excel in school. They say in light of pending federal litigation that seeks to have Section 504 declared unconstitutional, it is crucial we codify the provisions of Section 504 at the state level to support our students in need.

[Mrs. Mary Paul](#), supports this bill because, they are the parent of a child who benefits from the services of a 504 plan, and say the 504 plans are crucial to helping both their child, and other children that need special assistance, to both enjoy and excel in school. They say in light of pending federal litigation, it is crucial we codify the provisions of Section 504 at the state level to support our students in need.

[John Pez](#), submitted testimony in Spanish in support of this bill.

[Ms. Deborah Popkin](#), supports this bill because, because, as a school nurse, they know many students with disabilities who rely on, and deserve, 504 accommodations to excel in school alongside their peers.

[Diane Purvin](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans and services need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional in the face of legal challenges. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by the 504 plan to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[Hamden Resident, Dorian Rahamim](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans and services need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional in the face of legal challenges. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by the 504 plan to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[Carolina Ramirez](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans help give students with disabilities the tools they need to succeed, and feels by codifying Section 504 into state law, shows that Connecticut cares about education.

[Kelly Ranalli](#), supports this bill because, they are the parent of a child who benefits from the services of a 504 plan, and say the 504 plans are crucial to helping both their child, and other children that need special assistance, to both enjoy and excel in school. They say in light of

pending federal litigation, it is crucial we codify the provisions of Section 504 at the state level to support our students in need. They note that at one point their child, as well as many other children, received assistance in school from 504 plans, that greatly helped, but they may not have qualified for services via the IDEA act.

[Hamden Resident, Thomas Reznick](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans and services need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional in the face of legal challenges. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by the 504 plan to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[Mariah Roy](#), supports this bill because, they are the parent of a child who benefits from the services of a 504 plan, and say the 504 plans are crucial to helping both their child, and other children that need special assistance, to both enjoy and excel in school. They say in light of pending federal litigation, it is crucial we codify the provisions of Section 504 at the state level to support our students in need. They note that while their child presently has an IEP, many students who are in need rely solely on 504 plans for crucial accommodations.

[Jennifer Rucci](#), supports this bill because, they say maintaining funding for educational access is crucial.

[Kaylee Rutchik](#), supports this bill because, they are the parent of a child who benefits from the services of a 504 plan, and say the 504 plans are crucial to helping both their child, and other children that need special assistance, to both enjoy and excel in school. They say in light of pending federal litigation, it is crucial we codify the provisions of Section 504 at the state level to support our students in need.

[Blake Schnirring](#), supports this bill because, they are the parent of children who benefit from the services of a 504 plan, and say the 504 plans are crucial to helping both their children, and other children that need special assistance, to both enjoy and excel in school. They say in light of pending federal litigation, it is crucial we codify the provisions of Section 504 at the state level to support our students in need.

[Carrie Scoville](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans and services need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional in the face of legal challenges. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by the 504 plan to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[The Arc Connecticut, Director of Advocacy, Carol Scully](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans and services need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional in the face of legal challenges. They say there are students in Connecticut that critically need special assistance provided by 504 plans to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential. They also urge the education committee to create a low-cost enforcement mechanism to align with codifying Section 504 into law, such as this which was proposed by SEEK in their testimony.

[Hamden Resident, Rachel Silbermann](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans and services need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional in the face of legal challenges. They say there are 33,000

students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by 504 plans to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[Thej. Singh](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans and services need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional in the face of legal challenges. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by 504 plans to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[Rita Skog](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans and services need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional in the face of legal challenges. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by 504 plans to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[Patricia Sobraske](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans and services need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional in the face of legal challenges. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by 504 plans to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[State Advisory Council, Legislative Committee, Chair, Jeffry M. Spahr](#), supports this bill because,

[Jaylee Stokes](#), supports this bill because, they are the parent of a child that suffers from learning disabilities, and with the help of their 504 plan, their child has received proper accommodations so they have the ability to actively participate in their education.

[Bethany Strahan](#), supports this bill because, they are the parent of a child with a disability and while the child is too young to enroll in school at this point, they hope the benefits and assistance of 504 plans are accessible to them when they do enroll, as they believe those benefits will be crucial for the success of their child.

[Blake T.](#), supports this bill because, they are the parent of a child who receives 504 plan assistance, and it has been crucial to supporting his learning and success in school. They say this needs to be protected for all students in the state.

[Lauren T.](#), supports this bill because, they are the parent of a child who receives 504 plan assistance, and it has been crucial to supporting his learning and success in school. They say this needs to be protected for all students in the state.

[University of Connecticut, Jessica Tagliaferro](#), supports this bill because, as a parent and teacher, they have seen firsthand how 504 is used to assist students with a variety of disabilities, is needed for these children to succeed, and says the bill needs to be passed to ensure 504 assistance is still offered in the state to those who need it in the light of federal uncertainty.

[John Taylor](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans and services need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally

unconstitutional in the face of legal challenges. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by 504 plans to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[Kent Tedford](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans and services need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional in the face of legal challenges. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by 504 plans to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[Brianna Urbina](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans and services need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional in the face of legal challenges. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by 504 plans to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[Tony Violano](#), supports this bill because, they say 504 plans and services need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional in the face of legal challenges. They say there are 33,000 students in Connecticut that critically need the special assistance provided by 504 plans to excel in school alongside their peers and reach their full potential.

[Education Advocacy LLC, Director, Diane Willcutts](#), supports this bill because, given the state of the federal political climate, they say Connecticut needs to take steps to protect the rights of students with disabilities, and codifying Section 504 into state law is an important part of that.

[Purple Ladder LLC, Advocate Consultant and Parent, Rosalie Witt](#), supports this bill because, they are the parent of a child who benefits from 504 accommodations and in light of pending federal litigation that may deem Section 504 unconstitutional, says it is crucial it is codified into state law. They note that this would safeguard the rights of over 30,000 Connecticut students currently on 504 plans and unsure they will continue to receive the accommodations and services they need.

[Ariel Zborowski](#), supports this bill because, they are the sibling of a person who benefits from 504 accommodations and through those programs the has been able to succeed in school. They wish every child with disabilities will continue to receive the same support by codifying Section 504 into state law.

[Twenty-Six individuals](#) submitted testimony anonymously in support of the bill, saying that they feel 504 plans need to be protected and maintained in Connecticut even in the event Section 504 is deemed federally unconstitutional.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Amity Regional School District, Director of Pupil Services, Thomas H. Brant](#), opposes this bill because, they say it unnecessarily replicates Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act at the

state level, which they say is redundant, and duplicating them at the state level could lead to inconsistent interpretations and legal ambiguities. They say it also may add additional administrative burdens on school districts.

[Amity Regional School District, Superintendent, Jennifer Byars](#), opposes this bill because, they say it unnecessarily replicated Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act at the state level, which they say is redundant, and duplicating them at the state level could lead to inconsistent interpretations and legal ambiguities. They say it also may add additional administrative burdens on school districts.

[Bethel Public Schools, Superintendent, Christine Carver](#), opposes this bill because, they say it unnecessarily replicated Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act at the state level, which they say is redundant, and duplicating them at the state level could lead to inconsistent interpretations and legal ambiguities. They add that such changes could also cause unfunded mandates with expansions of services, training costs, legal fees and changes to processes/procedures and may add additional administrative burdens on school districts.

[Bethel Board of Education, Chairman, Scott Clayton](#), opposes this bill because, they say it unnecessarily replicated Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act at the state level, which they say is redundant, and duplicating them at the state level could lead to inconsistent interpretations and legal ambiguities.

[ConnCASE, Executive Director, Yvette Goorevitch](#), opposes this bill because, they say the bill duplicates and exceeds current federal requirements. The legislation they say seeks to assure implementation of existing Federal Law Section 504, which has been in place since 1973. They oppose extending current Federal Regulations into state law based upon threats of legal action in other states and jurisdictions.

[CT School Counselor Association, CSCA Board of Directors, Seth Korn](#), supports the intent of bill because, but urges the committee to make changes, including preventing school counselors from being the lone coordinators of 504 plans, because this distracts them from direct student support and creates a conflict with their student advocacy role. They also with data collection on students with 504 plans be mandated, much like how IEP data is collected, to track trends and ensure transparency. They wish to establish a state level working-group to evaluate staffing, roles and best practices related to 504 plans. Finally, they stress that counselors should maintain the 80/20 direct-to-indirect service ratio as defined by state law, and that overburdening them with 504 responsibilities undermines equitable student access to essential counseling services.

[Mothers for Future Leaders, Kelly Simmons](#), opposes this bill because, they say 504 plans have been a disaster for school districts across the country.

[Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Member, and Waterbury Board of Education, Member, Liz Brown](#), opposes this bill because, it would codify Section 504 into state law, which they say conflicts with current SDE regulatory processes and would create inconsistencies.

[One individual](#) submitted testimony anonymously in opposition to the bill, citing concerns with the effectiveness of 504s and IEPs, stating services that provide accommodations to students

are often executed poorly and that these programs have in part made teaching a more difficult profession to properly excel in, in recent years.

[CAPSS, Executive Director, Fran Rabinowitz](#), opposes this bill because, supports this bill because, while they support the rights of students with disabilities, they feel duplicating and expanding federal law (Section 504) at the state level is not only unnecessary but also risks creating confusion for schools and families across Connecticut.

Reported by: Alex Sferrazza

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