

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1511

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING DISCONNECTED YOUTH.

Vote Date: 3/28/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference to Appropriations

PH Date: 3/19/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The purpose of this bill is to adjust the Education Cost Sharing formula to increase the foundation amount for eligible school districts and add weight for students eligible for free or reduced-price meals, requiring special education, and multilingual learners for equalization aid grants. In addition, this bill aims to address the needs and success of disconnected youth by (1) adding the Department of Correction and Court Support Services to P20 WIN and requiring the data collection and sharing of disconnected youth, (2) establishing a youth success oversight board within a regional council of governments, (3) requiring the establishment of a program to provide school-based telehealth mental health services, and (5) requiring the distribution of youth employment funds to regional workforce development boards based on the percentage of disadvantaged youth in such region. This bill is important because it promotes educational equity, ensures better resource allocation for vulnerable students, and supports long-term success for disconnected youth through coordinated services and targeted investments in mental health and employment opportunities.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute makes several key changes. First, it adds regional workforce development boards to the P20 WIN data system. Second, it modifies Section 5 by requiring the Department of Public Health (DPH) to establish the program in partnership with an association of school-based health centers, mandates that the program operator be selected through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process and sets additional conditions for school

boards to participate in the program. Finally, it eliminates a provision previously included in Section 6.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Commissioner of the CT Department of Labor, Dante Bartolomeo: The testifier supports this bill, stating they appreciate the committee's focus on using data to identify and support at-risk and disconnected youth and believe there are many positive aspects of SB 1511. However, the testifier offered their thoughts on how the bill could benefit from changes to the language and particular sections. The testifier is concerned with Section 3 of this bill, particularly in the lines 139-146 which seek to use P20 WIN data to measure the effectiveness of programs. While P20 WIN can and does provide matched data and analysis that may provide insight into program effectiveness, there may be other factors outside the ability of P20 WIN to measure that may impact the effectiveness of a program. Section 4(4) then becomes a concern if rate schedules are set based on "effectiveness" as reported by P20 WIN. This method of setting rate schedules implies that programs would be compared to each other. While the testifier strongly supports Section 6 of this bill, the testifier requests the Education Committee consider removing Section 6(d). The testifier believes this subsection broadly sets eligibility terms across workforce programs that don't have this specific definition of "Disconnected Youth" in contract at this time, so the implication of how any expansion would be measured is unclear. The following organization(s) offered similar testimony:

Strategic Initiatives Director at the Workforce Alliance, Ann Harrison:

CEO of Capital Workforce Partners, Alex Johnson:

President & CEO, Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board, Michael Nogelo:

Deputy Director of the SEIU of CT State Council, Stacey Zimmerman:

Policy Analyst of The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity, TJ Nuccio: The testifier supports this bill, stating this legislation incorporates the Special Education Task Force's recommendation to add a 50% weight to the ECS formula for the number of special education students in the district and to increase the foundation amount. The testifier states in essence this bill will change the ECS formula's foundation amount from \$11,525 to \$12,488, would add weight for students with disabilities to the ECS formula, increase funding for economically disadvantaged students and multilingual learners, and establish school-based telehealth mental health services for students. In addition, the testifier states the CWCSEO recognizes the importance of specifically section 5 which requires the Department of Public Health to partner with an operator of a school-based health center that provides mental health services to establish a program from the provision of such services in the state through telehealth.

Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Education, Charlene Russell-Tucker: The testifier expressed their support for this bill.

City Councilwoman of Bridgeport, Maria I. Valle: The testifier supports this bill, stating this proposed legislation is critical in advancing equitable education opportunities for all students in Connecticut, particularly those in underfunded urban districts, such as Bridgeport. The testifier states that as an elected representative of our city, I have witnessed firsthand the

challenges that our public schools face. Our educators and administrators work tirelessly to provide high-quality education despite limited resources, overcrowded classrooms, and aging infrastructure. S.B. 1511 represents a necessary and long-overdue commitment to ensuring that our students—regardless of their zip code—receive the education they deserve. The testifier states that this bill will help bridge the persistent funding gap between urban and suburban school districts, ensuring that students in Bridgeport have access to the same academic resources, specialized programs, and support services as their peers across the state.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

The Town Council of Cheshire, Fiona A. Pearson: The testifier supports this bill, stating as our Town Council reviews our budget for 2026, we are facing a shortfall like one we have never seen before in the town of Cheshire. The testifier states that Cheshire public schools are having to address a variety of issues including their aging infrastructure, staffing shortages, and needs of students. As a result, the testifier states they support increasing the foundation grant as well as adding weight to the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula for students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and receiving free or reduced priced lunches. Such increases will ensure that all our students are provided with the high-quality support they need to succeed in school and life.

President & CEO of The Greater New Haven & Quinnipiac Chambers of Commerce, Garrett Sheehan: The testifier supports this bill, stating an investment in education is an investment in Connecticut's economic future. The testifier stated a foundation of a strong economy begins with a well-educated workforce. Employers across Connecticut consistently highlight workforce development as a top priority, and our ability to grow and attract businesses depends on ensuring that all young people have access to quality education and the resources necessary to succeed. The testifier states the current funding model leaves many students behind, particularly in urban centers like New Haven, where 83.48% of students are considered high needs. When students lack access to the educational resources they need, they are more likely to become disconnected from both education and the workforce, creating long term economic challenges for our state. So, the testifier supports this bill as it makes the necessary investments in our young people today to build a stronger Connecticut tomorrow.

House Minority Leader, Rep. Vincent J. Candelora: The testifier supports this bill, stating addressing the crisis of mental health among youth would have a transformative effect on our state's economy by filling a significant portion of unfilled jobs with diverse, talented workers and ultimately increasing Connecticut's GDP. Every day without action represents missed opportunities for economic growth and fiscal responsibility, Connecticut taxpayers bearing unnecessary social service costs, missed potential tax revenue from productive citizens, and failure to meet the workforce needs of local and state employers. The testifier is additionally in support of 1511's provision in Section 1 that increases the foundation amount of the ECS. The testifier states local budgets continue to be stretched thin, as are the budgets of the families, seniors, and businesses that pay taxes to fund public services, programs, and infrastructure. Just as the state cannot burden our residents with even higher taxes, elected officials cannot lose sight of how important it is to invest in our students of all backgrounds.

New Haven Board of Alders, Frank Douglass: The testifier supports this bill, stating this is a vital initiative to enhance the resources and support available to Connecticut's most vulnerable students, including those in New Haven. The testifier states that this bill adopts a comprehensive and thoughtful approach to addressing education and youth services inequities. By increasing foundational funding for equalization aid grants and recalibrating allocations to assist better students from low-income families, multilingual learners, and those requiring special education, the state move closer to establishing a more equitable school system that caters to each child's unique needs. A fairer funding structure is essential to ensuring that students in communities like ours—where financial instability is a daily concern—have access to quality education, irrespective of their zip code.

New Haven Board of Alders, Sarah Miller:

New Haven Board of Alders, Frank Redente:

New Haven Board of Alders, Caroline Smith:

Deputy Mayor of Bloomfield, Anthony Harrington: The testifier is in support of the increase in resources for students, schools, special education and funding for disconnected youth. However, the testifier does not agree with modifying or changing the elements of enrollment in these critical programs, because the students we serve will be negatively impacted. These programs provide young people with meaningful summer employment, in school certifications, and internship opportunities that prepare them for future careers.

Mayor of Wolcott, Thomas Dunn:

Mayor of Stratford, Laura Hoydick:

Mayor of New London, Michael Passero:

Selectman of Newtown, Michelle Embree Ku: The testifier supports this bill, stating they support the intent of S.B. 1511 and strongly believe that raising the foundation level in the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula is both essential and long overdue. The testifier states that in the twelve years they have served on Newtown's elected boards, they have never experienced a municipal budget cycle as difficult as the one they face in Newtown for 2025-2026.

First Selectman of North Haven, Michael Freda: The testifier supports this bill, stating this bill funds essential programs for our schools, students and districts and provide youth with telehealth mental health resources at a time when anxiety, social, emotional and behavioral health issues among our youth is escalating. The testifier states, this bill will fund the provisions that are essential to our students enabling them to become successful and flourish. It increases education funding, adds direct support for students with disabilities, broadens school-based mental health care, and ensures that disadvantaged students get the resources they need to thrive and navigate through today's socioeconomic challenges.

First Selectman of Thomaston, Edmond Mone:

First Selectman of Pomfret, Maureen Nicholson:

First Selectman for the Town of Waterford, Robert Brule: The testifier supports this bill, stating that on behalf of the Waterford taxpayers, they are profoundly disappointed and

concerned with the continued allocation of just \$326,444 in ECS funding towards a \$60 million Board of Education annual budget. Despite Waterford's percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch, Waterford receives a disproportionately low sum of annual funding. The testifier states they support this bill and its provision to re-evaluate the ECS funding formula to ensure a more equitable distribution of state education resources.

First Selectman Town of Canterbury, Christopher Lippke:

Interim Superintendent of Bridgeport Public Schools, Dr. Royce Avery: The testifier supports this bill, stating it is a critical step toward investing in Connecticut's future. In Bridgeport, over 6,000 students are multilingual learners, and more than 4,100 need special education services, making up 50% of our district enrollment. SB 1511 will help address the specific needs of these students by increasing the low-income student weight from 30% to 40%, boosting the multilingual learner weight from 25% to 35%, and adding a 50% weight for students with disabilities— for the first time ever in the ECS formula. These changes to the ECS formula as a result of SB 1511, yield a more equitable distribution of funding to districts like Bridgeport, where nearly 90% of our students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. The following superintendent(s) offer similar testimony:

Superintendent of Bethel Public Schools, Christine Carver:

Superintendent of Danbury Public Schools, Kara Casimiro:

Superintendent of Derby Public Schools, Dr. Matthew Conway Jr.:

Superintendent of the Goodwin University Magnet School System, Salvatore Menzo:

Superintendent of Enfield Public Schools, Steven Moccio:

Superintendent of New Haven Public Schools, Madeline Negron:

Superintendent of New London Public Schools, Dr. Cynthia Ritchie:

Superintendent of Cheshire Public Schools, Jeff Solan:

Superintendent of Colchester Public Schools, Daniel Sullivan:

Superintendent of East Hampton Public Schools, Timothy Van Tassel, Ed.D.

Deputy Superintendent of Hartford Public Schools, Paul Foster:

Superintendents of Connecticut's Alliance Districts, Joseph Macary:

President of the New London Board of Education, Elaine Maynard-Adams: The testifier supports this bill, stating New London is facing a very grave situation regarding their FY 2026 budget. The testifier states that under the Governor's proposed budget, New London stands to lose more than \$2 million in state assistance, largely from losses in PILOT. New London's revaluation increased their grant list enough that New London is now in the "hold harmless" category for Connecticut's Education Cost Sharing award. The testifier states New London is one of the districts responsible for helping the children most in need of services get to a point where they are able to learn and succeed, so please support New London schools. The following individual(s) submitted similar testimony:

Chief Financial Officer to New London Public Schools, Robert Funk:

Chief Financial Officer to Bridgeport Public Schools, Nestor Nkwo:

Chief Financial Officer to Hartford Public Schools, Caitlin Richard:

Board Chair for Hartford Public Schools, Jennifer Hockenhull:

Chair of the Pomfret Board of Finance, Margie Huoppi:

Chair of the Essex Board of Education, Lon Seidman:

Chairperson of the Bridgeport Board of Education, Jennifer Perez:
Member of the Hartford Board of Education, Cristher Estrada Perez:
2nd Vice Chair of Hartford Board of Education, Tyrone Walker:
President of the New Haven Board of Education, OrLando Yarborough III:

Educator in the Connecticut Education Association, Dr. Lammia Agoora: The testifier supports this bill, stating this bill will go a long way towards addressing the underfunding that the school system in Danbury has experienced for decades. By increasing the Education Cost Share formula's foundation amount, adding weight for students with disabilities to the ECS formula, increasing funding for economically disadvantaged students and multilingual learners, and establishing school-based telehealth mental health services for students, this bill will finally begin to help our students receive the educational resources they deserve. The testifier outlines the results of underfunding in schools: outdated textbooks; overcrowded classrooms; a lack of support services. Ultimately, the testifier supports this bill for the additional resources it allocates to students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, multilingual learners, and students with limited healthcare access. The testifier anticipates these changes would greatly enhance both the academic success and overall well-being of Connecticut's students, allowing them to reach their full potential. The following individual(s) from the Connecticut Education Association offer similar testimony:

Vice President of the Connecticut Education Association, Joslyn DeLancey:
President of the Connecticut Education Association, Kate Dias:

Aicha Alouah: The testifier supports this bill, stating they specifically support the proposed revisions to the Educational Cost Share (ECS) formula that will increase the foundation amount for equalization aid grants. As a Speech-Language Pathologist in New Haven Public Schools with a caseload of approximately 75 students across 3 different schools, the testifier shared that it is extremely difficult to provide effective services to students because they are stretched so thin. However, if Connecticut school districts, like New Haven, had an increased level of state funding the testifier said they could better serve their students which would benefit the Connecticut community.

Anonymous, Anonymous: The testifier supports this bill, stating this legislation represents a critical step towards addressing the systemic inequities that have long hindered the educational and developmental opportunities of Bridgeport's youth. It would maximize funding and close the funding gap between Bridgeport and other cities. The testifier finds that this bill offers a vital framework for addressing inequities in the distribution of funds, disparities in support, and disconnected youth.

Executive Director of TEEG, Carl Asikainen: The testifier supports this bill, stating every young person in Connecticut deserves the freedom to pursue their dreams and build their future. Yet, the testifier states, more than 100,000 young people between age 14 and age 26 are struggling to stay on track due to barriers at home, school, and work. The testifier supports this bill, as a critical step toward ensuring every young person in Connecticut has the freedom and support to build a stable and fulfilling future.

Jocelyn Ault: The testifier supports this bill, stating they are testifying in support of Connecticut's most vulnerable students, who deserve to be funded equitably, fully, and

immediately, and have access to all the resources they need to thrive both in school and in life. The testifier states this bill give all students these critical resources that will increase students' ability to perform and succeed both academically and mentally.

Lauren Mancini-Averitt: The testifier supports this bill, stating this bill will bring much-needed changes to Connecticut's schools, students, and districts by increasing funding and direct access to school-based telehealth mental health resources. The testifier states, that by increasing the ECS formula's foundation amount, increasing the formula's weights for additional student learning needs, and adding a fourth weight for students with disabilities, this bill ensure districts have the resources to properly support all students.

Associate Professor at CCSU, Christina Barmon: The testifier supports this bill, stating Connecticut is one of the most unequal states. The testifier states Connecticut is one of the wealthiest places in the world, yet Connecticut schools have the worst funding inequity of any other state except Nebraska and Texas and boast the worst opportunity gap in the country. All at a time when we have 6 billion in reserves. Thus, the testifier supports changes to the ECS formula to ensure all of the state's children benefit from fully funded and staffed schools.

Director of Mental Health and Prevention for Haddam-Killingworth Youth and Family Services, Allison Behnke: The testifier support this bill, stating data from the recent Dalio Education Report reveals that youth in Connecticut communities need support and guidance to navigate today's landscape and world. 119,000 young people in Connecticut between ages 14 and 26 are at-risk or disconnected; 63,000 of these individuals are completely disconnected, meaning they are neither in school nor employed; students are displaying chronic absenteeism, social disengagement, and juvenile justice involvement are major risk factors with one in three Connecticut high schoolers at risk of not graduating. The testifier states disconnected youth are at significantly higher risk of poverty, homelessness, justice system involvement, and long-term economic instability. Addressing this crisis requires community-based prevention and intervention strategies, the exact services provided by Connecticut's Youth Service Bureaus and included in this bill.

CEO of Voices of Women of Color, Denise Best: The testifier supports this bill, stating they are testifying today in support of Connecticut's most vulnerable students, who deserve to be funded equitably, fully, and immediately, and have access to all the resources they need to thrive both in school and in life. The testifier shared that their grandson has Down syndrome, and as an educator, it is clear their grandson is not receiving a quality education. The testifier states S.B. 1511 makes necessary changes to the ECS formula by increasing the foundation amount, increasing the formula's existing need-based weights, and adding another weight for students with disabilities. These changes will bring the necessary increased funding for our most vulnerable student populations to districts at a time when every dollar matters, and when every additional resource a student has access to has the potential to change their lives both in the short and long-term.

New Haven Federation of Teachers, Leslie Blatteau: The testifier supports this bill, stating they are in strong support of the proposed revisions to the Education Cost Sharing formula. The testifier shared that as a classroom teacher and parent, they can confirm that New

Haven Public Schools are underfunded and understaffed, and this structural issue of underfunding is an issue of racial and economic justice for the families who send their children to public school and for our state as a whole. The testifier shared that according to a recent study by the Albert Shenker Institute of Connecticut, CT ranks 48 out of 48 in Equal Opportunity. The soft bigotry of low expectations originates with our tacit approval that some children, because of the wealth of their parents, deserve more school funding than others. That is why the testifier supports this bill in its aim of improving the standard and quality of schools across Connecticut.

Chair of Legislative Committee at CT Association of School Psychologists, Thomas H. Brant:

The testifier supports this bill, stating they particularly support the aspects of SB 1511 that address disconnected youth and support the youth workforce development. The testifier states these components are vital in ensuring that Connecticut's young people have access to the resources and opportunities they need to thrive. However, the testifier opposed the provisions in lines 167-194 that pertain to school-based telehealth practices. While expanding mental health services for students is an important goal, school-based telehealth is not the appropriate solution. Instead of relying on virtual mental health support, the testifier recommends that schools receive enough funds to hire trained, on-site mental health professionals.

Director of Data at Compass Youth Collaborative, Christopher Brechlin: The testifier supports this bill, stating this bill will strengthen the ability of regional partners to address the needs of disconnected youth. The testifier states that adding the Department of Correction and Court Support Services Division to the list of participating agencies in CP20 WIN will improve their ability to measure how many young people are at risk of disconnection due to their involvement in the criminal justice system. The testifier also supports the creation of youth success oversight boards within Councils of Government that will further improve coordination across education districts and providers. However, the testifier recommends using consistent language to define "disconnected youth" and "young people."

Chief Executive Officer of Compass Youth Collaborative, Jaqueline Santiago Nazario:

Principal of New Haven Public School, Ann Brillante: The testifier supports this bill, stating that through their lived experiences, personally and professionally, they have witnessed the transformative power of education and investments in critical programs, including life skills and transition-to-work programs. The testifier states that designing appropriate services is not the struggle, rather it is the uncertainty of funding that looms large. The testifier states that they build programs that meet the needs of students and families but they are fragile. That is why they are in support of S.B. 1511. The proposed increases to the ECS formula—especially the additional weight for students in need, including multilingual learners, students requiring special education, and those eligible for free or reduced-price meals—are vital and will help to stabilize and sustain their programs, ensuring that their students receive the high-quality services they deserve, no matter their background. The following individual(s) offer similar testimony:

Principal of James Hillhouse High School, Dr. Antoine Billy:

Principal Wilbur Cross High School, Matt Brown:
Chairman Bethel Board of Education, Scott Clayton:
Assistant Principal of Bassick High School:

Franyeury Burgos: The testifier supports this bill, stating every student deserves fair and adequate funding – no less than those in surrounding towns. The testifier offers that Bridgeport schools, for instance, are struggling under immense financial strain, forcing devastating cuts to essential programs, staff, and services that their children rely on. The testifier states that a child's future should not be determined by their zip code, yet the current funding system places certain students at a severe disadvantage. The following individual(s) offer similar testimony:

Parent and Educator, Antoinette Burnett:
Parent, Paul Boudreau:
Parent, Ruth R. Fortune, Esq.:
Parent, Timothy Gabriele:
Parent, Charisa Gatison:
Parent, Callie Gale Heilmann:
Parent, Maritza E. Jimenez:
Parent, Stefanie Kostelis:
Parent, Jessica Light:
Parent, Juliana Mann:
Parent, Lisandra Montalvo
Parent, Maria Morocho:
Parent, Lisaly Munoz:
Parent, Yedni Ocotl:
Parent, Betzaida Ortiz Souchet:
Parent, Sheila Pastor Cruz:
Parent, Sharon Saavedra:
Parent, Jacqueline Torres:
Parent, David Weinreb:
Parent, Clea Wilson:
Parent, Travis Woodward:
Parent, Caroline Barron:
Parent, Ruth R. Fortune, Esq.:
Concerned Citizen, Debbie Butler:
Member of the Danbury Collective, Jaqueline Cabrera:
Kate Conetta:
Mary Consoli:
Irene Corsaro:
Rachel Grimmer:
Lauren Sanchez:
Portia Scott-Thiam:
Nakia Dawson Douglas:
Debbie Butler:
Chantel Serrant:
Rachel Grimmer:

Bishop John Diamond:
Pastor William McCullough:
Resident of Avon, Lynn Katz:
Resident of Avon, Thej Singh:
Resident of Bloomfield, Patricia Sobraske:
Resident of Bridgeport, Meg Doyle:
Resident of Bridgeport, Rita E. Skog:
Resident of Bridgeport, Rev. Cass L Shaw
Resident of Brookfield, Francis Farrell:
Resident of Danbury, Brianna Urbina:
Resident of Danbury, Richard Jannelli:
Resident of Danbury, Jacqueline Cabrera:
Resident of Danbury, Hannah Mikesell:
Resident of East Hartford, Goviana Morales:
Resident of Hamden, Allison Dickin:
Resident of Hamden, Thomas Reznick:
Resident of Hamden, Evelyn Huynh:
Resident of Hamden, Melissa Langdon:
Resident of Hamden, Rashanda McCollum:
Resident of Hamden, John Taylor:
Resident of Hamden, Rayna Walters:
Resident of Litchfield, Kent Tedford:
Resident of Meriden, Carrie Scoville:
Resident of Norwalk, Julie Fleming:
Resident of Norwalk, Kirsten Wieser
Resident of New Hartford, Jeffrey Sousa:
Resident of North Haven, Marilina Imperati:
Resident of New Haven, Jamie Krzmarzick:
Resident of Oxford, Tony Violano:
Resident of Stamford, Tania Recinos:
Resident of Waterbury, Rafael Rosario:
Resident of Wethersfield, Iris Ortiz Sanchez:
Resident of West Hartford, Rubi Diaz:
Resident of Winchester, Timothy Dutton:
Angela Faye:
Lourdes Fronseca:

Member of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Thomas Burr: The testifier supports this bill, stating these sections are particularly critical provisions: establishing mental health programming via telehealth in SBHC's (School-based Health Centers); adding the Department of Correction and Court Support Services to P20 WIN; requiring data collection and sharing concerning disconnected youth. The testifier states telehealth was one of the truly good things that came out of the COVID pandemic and should be available as an option for students who need mental health services. The testifier applauds the state of Connecticut's continued focus on addressing the issues around disconnected youth and

support the inclusion of these two state agencies in the data collection and sharing processes.

Director of Education at Mystic Seaport Museum, Sarah Cahill: The testifier supports this bill stating, more than one in five high school students (119,000) in Connecticut are at-risk or disconnected from school and opportunity across the state. Youth employment, particularly for those disconnected from school or work, improves work readiness, expands professional networks, boost earning which then cycles back into the economy, and reduces the need for intervention via the criminal justice system or other social services. Mystic Seaport Museum is a key partner through the Maritime Adventure Program in helping engage disconnected youth. However, a serious cut to Mystic Seaport Museum's funding would mean a percentage of youth would no longer have access to their employment funding. The testifier states that getting youth back on track and employed would help fill a large portion of the state's unfilled jobs, boost gross domestic product by \$5 billion–\$5.5 billion, and improve fiscal performance by \$650 million - \$750 million annually--in the form of added tax revenue and lower spending on government services--accelerating statewide economic growth.

Director at CT Cradle to Career Coalition, Kathleen Callahan: The testifier supports this bill, stating this bill advances the Coalition's policy priorities by: enhancing data collection (Section 3) to ensure targeted interventions for disconnected youth; establishing regional oversight boards (Section 4) to improve coordination of services; expanding culturally competent telehealth mental health services in school-based health centers (Section 5), addressing the youth mental health crisis; strengthening regional workforce development (Section 6) to increase economic mobility for young people.

Office of Chief Public Defender, Renee Cimino: The testifier supports this bill, stating this legislation is designed to reduce Connecticut's disconnected youth population through a variety of strategies. The testifier states this bill's establishment of youth success oversight boards, school-based mental health services and employment opportunities will provide disconnected young people with the services, support and opportunities to reconnect to education and employment pathways.

Program Coordinator of the New London Youth Affairs, Paola Cruz: The testifier supports this bill, stating this bill helps their mission of promoting positive outcomes for children, youth, and families by providing range of comprehensive services and collaborations. The following organization(s) offer similar testimony:

Associate Executive Director of DOMUS Kids, Julie DeGennaro:

Policy Administrator at Tow Youth Justice Institute, Shelby Griffiths:

Greenwich Youth Services Bureau, Danielle S. Guillaume:

Executive Director of EASTCONN, Eric Protulis:

Director of EASTCONN, Kristin Hempel:

Member of EASTCONN, Cyndi Wells:

Senior Director of Access Community Action Agency, Krider Kathleen:

Executive Director of the CT Association of School Based Health Center Inc. Melanie Wilde-Line:

CEO of Connecticut's Boys and Girls Club, Don Maletto:

Executive Director of ReadyCT, Shannon Marimon:
Attorney for the Center for Childrens Advocacy, Zoe Masters:
Director of Administration of GROW Windham, Sarah Milius:
CEO of Our Piece of the Pie, Hector Rivera Jr.:
Director of Advocacy at The Arc of Connecticut Inc. Carol Scully:
Public Policy Officer of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, Chris Senecal:
Director at the Alliance Voice of Community Nonprofits, Ben Shaiken:
Policy Intern at CCM, Erica Soares:
Founder of The Hartford Special Education Parent Teacher Organization, Rachel Taylor:
Executive Director of Bridgeport Caribe Youth Leaders, John Torres:
Chief of LOVE146, Erin Williamson:
Chief Executive Officer of Effective School Solutions, Duncan Young:

CEO of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, Joe Delong: The testifier supports this bill, stating this bill embodies their commitment to the future of Connecticut's youth. The testifier states, Connecticut's educational system finds itself at a critical juncture; Connecticut's educational structures have operated in silos, leaving many students without the support they desperately need. Hence, the testifier supports this bill for the following provisions that improve the quality and accessibility of Connecticut schools: increasing the foundation grant to account for inflation; introducing a weight to the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula for students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and students on free and reduced lunch; instituting data collection and sharing regarding disconnected youth through the P20 WIN system. The following organization(s) provided similar testimony:

Executive Director of Connecticut Council of Small Towns, Betsy Gara:
Executive Director of Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments, Samuel Gold:
Executive Director of Capitol Region Council of Governments, Matthew W. Hart:
Executive Director of Northwest Hills Council of Governments, Robert Phillips:

Executive Director of CT Youth Services Association, Kathryn Dube: The testifier supports this bill, stating that disconnected youth are at significantly higher risk of poverty, homelessness, justice system involvement, and long-term economic instability. However, the testifier states, this bill addresses this crisis, requiring community-based prevention and intervention strategies, the exact services provided by Connecticut's Youth Service Bureaus. The testifier states that by passing this bill, Connecticut would expand regional coordination of youth services, ensuring at-risk youth do not fall through the cracks, strengthen youth workforce development, providing pathways to economic self-sufficiency, and enhance early intervention and diversion programs, reducing long-term social service costs. While youth service bureaus are already doing this work, additional support is urgently needed to increase and expand the impact. The testifier states that this bill offers a critical opportunity to strengthen statewide efforts to re-engage disconnected youth and build a more resilient and prepared youth for Connecticut's future.

Michael Duggan: The testifier supports this bill with a few revisions. The testifier states that Section 3, 9-10 defining disconnected youth should substitute the definition for definition included in the 2023 report *Connecticut's Unspoken Crisis*. The testifier urges lawmakers to partner with nonprofit experts for developing metrics. The testifier commends lawmakers for expanding access to workforce development but also asks that you work with providers to ensure each program is structured in a way that supports these young people as they need wraparound supports and intentional relationships with youth development professionals in addition to workforce development skills to find success.

Student Services at Bridgeport Public Schools, Cheryl Faga: The testifier supports this bill, stating Bridgeport is one of eight districts identified by the Dalio Foundation and CCM as having over 40% of students at risk of not graduating high school. Within that 40% of Bridgeport students require special education support, multilingual support, and, in some cases, both services. The testifier states that over 6,000 Bridgeport students are multilingual learners and over 4,000 Bridgeport students require some form of special education services. The testifier states that the young people of Bridgeport have ideas and goals for their futures and deserve the same opportunities as their peers in more affluent areas. The testifier states that this bill would ultimately provide Bridgeport with an additional \$57.2 million in ECS funding in FY 2026 compared to the current ECS formula. The testifier states this funding is not just about numbers; it's about providing the resources needed to support Bridgeport and its students' unique needs. In conclusion, this bill addresses the educational and developmental needs of Connecticut's youth while balancing the distinct needs of each district by adjusting the formula.

Legislative Chair of SEEK, Andrew Feinstein: The testifier supports this bill, stating this bill incorporates the recommendations of the Special Education Task Force and the 119K Commission to add a 50% weight to the ECS formula for the number of special education students in the district and to increase the foundation amount. SEEK is enthusiastically in support of this. The testifier states that if districts receive greater sums from the state, the demands of the special education programs can be met and the friction between general education and special education will be reduced. The bill also seeks to expand apprenticeship programs and summer and seasonal employment programs. These programs, which are of enormous benefit to disconnected youth, are also important transitional programs for students with disabilities. Presently, there is not a seamless connection from school-based transition programs to adult employment. Expansion of these employment programs could make a big difference for students with disabilities. The following SEEK member(s) offer similar testimony:

President of SEEK, John Flanders:

President of the Hartford Federation of Teachers, Carol Gale: The testifier supports this bill stating, they know firsthand the effects of inadequate funding on Hartford students. They spent hundreds of dollars each year to outfit the classroom with materials, equipment and supplies they needed to deliver quality instruction to my students within a safe and encouraging classroom climate. To supplement their own spending, they used their birthday and Christmas as opportunities to ask for some items for their classroom such as math

manipulatives or books for my class library. Despite these expenditures, supplies ran out every year and students would have to adjust. Furthermore, persistent lack of funding led to a crisis in staffing. The testifier states, students went without a math teacher or a science teacher, sometimes for a whole year, or had a revolving door of substitutes or other teachers covering their class. The testifier states that Americans face threats of funding cuts from the federal government. However, Connecticut is the wealthiest state in our affluent country with enough for everyone. The testifier urges lawmakers to invest in Connecticut's young people and fund the future of public education for every Connecticut student. The following school administrators provide similar testimony:

New Haven Public School Teacher, Isabelle Geller:

New Haven Public School Teacher, Kelly Hebrank:

New Haven Public School Teacher, CT Teacher of the Year, Julia Miller:

New Haven Public School Teacher, MarcAnthony P. Solli:

New Haven Public School Teacher and Parent, Stephen Staysniak:

Bridgeport Public School Counselor, Sakina Gordon:

Bridgeport Public School Teacher, Amanda Peloso Sims:

Bridgeport Public School Teacher, Tara Smiley:

Danbury Public School Teacher, Julian Schafer:

Special Education Teacher and VP of New Haven Federation of Teachers, Jennifer Graves:

Special Education Teacher and Member of the New Haven Federation of Teachers, Ryan Plourde:

Social Work Intern, Emily Kline:

Bridgeport Public School Paraprofessional, Josh Kristy:

School Psychologist and Member of New Haven Federation of Teachers, Christopher Latka:

Derby Public School Teacher, Alicia Lombard:

Danbury Public School Teacher, Heather Lorenz:

Chief Operating Officer at UWCWC, Ashely Gaudiano: The testifier supports this bill, stating this bill and SB 1 align with their coalition's mission. The testifier states this bill expands mental health access and directs youth employment and training funds to regional workforce boards, ensuring resources reach those who need them most.

Public Policy Associate at CBIA, Jenna Grasso: The testifier supports this bill, stating the business community wishes to express its support for Section 6 of this bill. The testifier states that funding youth employment through workforce development boards by allocating the funds according to the percentage of disadvantaged youth in each region represents a sustainable approach to engaging disconnected youth while allowing the flexibility to adjust funding based on U.S. Census regional demographics and need. It is crucial for policymakers to continue to support workforce development programs that create pathways to rewarding career opportunities that will bring Connecticut's disconnected youth into the workforce to help address the growing needs of our state's employers.

Executive Director of School and State Finance Project, Lisa Hammersley: The testifier supports this bill, stating the provisions outlined in this bill are vital steps toward creating a

more equitable and student-centered funding system. The testifier states they fully support the 119K Commission's recommendations to revise and update the state's ECS formula to ensure our students receive the resources they need to thrive. The Commission's bold plan calls for comprehensive reforms, including increased funding, stronger accountability measures, and equitable facilities funding so all students — regardless of their learning needs or where they live — can attend a safe, well-resourced school. The testifier states one young person left behind is too many. When 119,000 are at risk, the need for action is urgent.

Student at Wilbur Cross High School, Manxi Han: The testifier supports this bill, stating that for all public education in New Haven has given me, in many ways, it has fallen short of giving its students all they deserve. Year after year, New Haven has struggled to allocate the sparse funding we have to pay for all our students' needs. The testifier states our school district is still experiencing a years-long deficit, which has had devastating consequences.

Student at New London High School, Da'Shaun Phillips:

Student at James Hillhouse High School, Badu Smart.:

Clinical Strategy Consultant for Hazel Health, Bob McCullough: The testifier supports this bill, stating that section 5 of this bill allows for mental health services to be implemented to support the approximate 119k disconnected youth across the state, overcome significant learning loss and conquer persistent barriers to opportunities. The testifier states that as the nation's largest provider of school-centered telehealth services, he can attest that Hazel Health guarantees that students remain in class, engaged, and ready to learn. This holistic approach has the potential to improve not just short-term academic outcomes, but long-term health and well-being. The testifier states that the model that Hazel Health has developed is a proven, sustainable solution that makes healthcare more accessible and impactful for students. The testifier urges the General Assembly to support efforts to expand access to school-centered telehealth services across Connecticut to ensure that every child, regardless of their background, could succeed and lead a healthy, fulfilling life.

Chief Operating Officer of Cartwheel, Daniel Tartakovsky:

Others in Support of this Bill:

Jose Andrade

Ellie Angerame

Concerned Parent

Anonymous, Anonymous

Anonymous, Anonymous

Gabrielle Bagot

Sauda Baraka

Jamie Barrett

Caroline Barron

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, Jeffery Beckham: The testifier opposes this bill, stating that Section 1 and 2 of this bill make significant changes to the Education

Cost Sharing (ECS) formula. The testifier states that the changes will cumulatively, according to preliminary calculations by the Department of Education, result in an ECS Entitlement increase of \$525-550 million – above what is included in the Governor’s recommended budget. The testifier states that given the current budget climate we respectfully oppose the changes to the ECS formula included in these sections of the bill.

Maria French: The testifier opposes this bill, stating they don’t believe this bill BEST serves Connecticut families and children. The testifier states this bill perpetuates the reality of the “Two Connecticut’s” where students in wealthy towns enjoy fully funded educational experiences and other students, specifically Black and brown students and students from low-income families, attend schools that are not fully funded.

Reported by: Lucy Sheldon

Date: 5/1/25