



Substitute House Bill No. 5323

Public Act No. 26-139

AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. Section 10-244a of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

(a) For the school year commencing July 1, 2013, and each school year thereafter, no municipality or local or regional board of education may employ or enter into an agreement, as described in subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of section 53a-217b, with any person, other than a sworn member of an organized local police department or a retired [police] officer as provided in subsection (b) of this section, to provide security services in a public school if such person will possess a firearm, as defined in section 53a-3, while in the performance of his or her duties.

(b) A municipality or a local or regional board of education may employ or enter into an agreement with a retired [police] officer to provide security services in a public school if such retired [police] officer is a (1) qualified retired law enforcement officer, as defined in 18 USC 926C, as amended from time to time, or (2) parole officer who meets the qualifications specified for a qualified retired law enforcement officer under 18 USC 926C, as applicable to a parole officer. Such retired

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[police] officer shall receive annual training pursuant to section 7-294x and shall successfully complete annual firearms training provided by a certified firearms instructor that meets or exceeds the standards of the Police Officer Standards and Training Council or 18 USC 926C, as amended from time to time. Such retired [police] officer shall not be subject to the licensing requirements of part II of chapter 534.

(c) For the purposes of subsection (b) of this section, ["retired police officer"] (1) "retired officer" means [(1)] (A) a sworn member of an organized local police department who was certified by the Police Officer Standards and Training Council, [and] retired or separated in good standing from such department [or] and is not prohibited from being hired by a law enforcement unit pursuant to section 7-291c, (B) a sworn member of the Division of State Police within the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection who retired or separated in good standing from said division [, (2)] and is not prohibited from being hired by a law enforcement unit pursuant to section 7-291c, (C) a sworn federal law enforcement agent who retired or separated in good standing from such federal law enforcement service, is not prohibited from being hired by a law enforcement unit pursuant to section 7-291c and [who] meets or exceeds the standards of the Police Officer Standards and Training Council for certification in this state, [or (3)] (D) a sworn officer of an organized police department in another state who was certified under standards that meet or exceed the standards of the Police Officer Standards and Training Council for certification in this state, [and who] retired or separated in good standing from such department and is not prohibited from being hired by a law enforcement unit pursuant to section 7-291c, or (E) a parole officer who retired or separated in good standing from the Department of Correction, and (2) "good standing" means the status of a police officer whose employment in a law enforcement unit, as defined in section 7-294a, or a parole officer whose employment with the Department of Correction, was not terminated as a result of disciplinary action or

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during a period when such police officer or parole officer was under investigation or disciplinary action was pending.

Sec. 2. (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) The Connecticut Advisory Council for School Administrator Professional Standards, established pursuant to section 10-144e of the general statutes, in consultation with the Connecticut Association of Schools, shall establish a pilot program for a new school administrator mentorship program. Such pilot program shall include, but need not be limited to, supports, training and professional development for new school administrators. Not later than July 1, 2027, the council shall report the plan for implementation of the pilot program to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes.

(b) For the school year commencing July 1, 2027, the Connecticut Advisory Council for School Administrator Professional Standards shall implement the pilot program in school districts identified in the plan developed pursuant to subsection (a) of this section. Not later than January 1, 2029, the council shall report on the results of the pilot program, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education. Such report shall include, but need not be limited to, recommendations for improvement to and requirements for the further implementation of the pilot program.

Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) Not later than July 1, 2027, no local or regional board of education shall require students in grades nine to twelve, inclusive, who participate in any interscholastic athletics to meet or exceed academic eligibility standards that are higher than the academic eligibility standards established by the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference.

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Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) The Department of Education shall, within available appropriations, establish a grant program for the provision of a therapeutic arts program in public schools for the school year commencing July 1, 2027, and each school year thereafter. Such grant shall be in an amount determined by the Commissioner of Education and available to any local or regional board of education or regional educational service center interested in providing a therapeutic arts program, but the department shall prioritize boards of education or regional educational service centers serving school districts with a high rate of exclusionary discipline, lack of access to behavioral health services and supports and an existing social-emotional learning program. Not later than January 1, 2027, the department shall post in a conspicuous location on its Internet web site information about the grant program, including, but not limited to, eligibility criteria, application forms and the amount of grant funds available to applicants.

(b) Not later than July 1, 2028, and annually thereafter, the Department of Education shall submit a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education. Such report shall include the number of grants awarded and recipients of such grants.

Sec. 5. (*Effective from passage*) (a) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 10-264l of the general statutes, the Commissioner of Education may authorize, for a period not to exceed two years, the temporary placement of students enrolled in the Bridgeport Military Academy in available classroom space at the Fairchild Wheeler Interdistrict Magnet Campus for the purpose of facilitating construction of a permanent facility for the Bridgeport Military Academy.

(b) The temporary placement of students authorized under this section shall be limited to the grades and programs of the Bridgeport Military Academy approved by the Department of Education and shall

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not be deemed to alter the interdistrict magnet school status of the Fairchild Wheeler Interdistrict Magnet Campus or the eligibility of Fairchild Wheeler Interdistrict Magnet Campus for operating grant funding under section 10-264*l* of the general statutes.

(c) The Department of Education shall assign a separate facility code to the Bridgeport Military Academy during such temporary placement and shall continue to maintain separate enrollment, performance and accountability metrics for both the Bridgeport Military Academy and the Fairchild Wheeler Interdistrict Magnet Campus.

(d) The Department of Education shall establish guidelines to ensure that such temporary placement of students does not result in the commingling of students in core academic courses or programs, except as expressly approved by the Commissioner of Education for purposes consistent with each school's educational program.

(e) Upon completion of the new permanent facility, the Bridgeport Military Academy shall vacate the temporary location and temporary placement of students at the Fairchild Wheeler Interdistrict Magnet Campus and resume operations in the new permanent facility.

Sec. 6. (*Effective from passage*) Section 51 of public act 24-41 shall take effect July 1, 2027.

Sec. 7. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) As used in this section, "broad assessment" means an assessment that measures what students should have learned during a semester or during a school year. "Broad assessment" does not include the state-wide mastery examinations under section 10-14n of the general statutes or any other student assessments required by state or federal law.

(b) Not later than July 1, 2027, the Commissioner of Education shall establish, within available appropriations, an incentive program for school districts that (1) reduces or limits the amount of time students

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spend on taking broad assessments during the school year, (2) integrates state-provided interim and formative assessment tools into the local curriculum in a manner that supports ongoing instructional improvement, and (3) increases teacher competency in the formative assessment process. The incentive program may include public recognition, financial awards and enhanced autonomy or operational flexibility for school districts.

Sec. 8. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) Not later than June 1, 2027, the Department of Education shall develop and provide guidance to local and regional boards of education on effective strategies for reducing the amount of discretionary local student assessments. Such guidance may include the elimination of the fall and spring administration of broad assessments, as defined in section 7 of this act, or substituting, where appropriate, certain end-of-unit classroom summative assessments with state-provided interim and formative assessment tools.

Sec. 9. (*Effective from passage*) The Commissioner of Education may, after consultation with the working group established pursuant to section 28 of public act 24-45, submit a request to the United States Secretary of Education to amend the state's approved plan submitted pursuant to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, 20 USC 6301, et seq., as amended from time to time, and reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act, P.L. 114-95. Such request may include a waiver from federal accountability requirements under said act that allows the Department of Education to modify the state's high school accountability model by reducing the weight assigned to the academic achievement indicator and increasing the weight for other relevant indicators, such as college and career-oriented measures.

Sec. 10. (*Effective from passage*) (a) Not later than January 1, 2027, the Commissioner of Education shall redesign Connecticut's high school mathematics pathways to prepare students for relevant postsecondary careers. Such mathematics pathways shall include, but need not be

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limited to, (1) science, technology, engineering and mathematics, (2) data science and statistics, (3) quantitative reasoning, and (4) workforce and applied mathematics. The commissioner may consult with relevant stakeholders to implement the provisions of this subsection.

(b) The commissioner, in consultation with the Connecticut Educator Preparation and Certification Board established pursuant to section 10-150b of the general statutes, shall develop guidelines for the role of mathematics specialists in supporting mathematics interventions in schools.

(c) Not later than January 1, 2027, the commissioner shall (1) develop a list of professional development providers to support the implementation of high-quality mathematics instruction, and (2) explore the feasibility of launching MathConn, a professional learning series for educators. The commissioner may consult with relevant stakeholders to implement the provisions of this subsection.

Sec. 11. Section 10-222c of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

(a) No local or regional board of education, governing council of a state or local charter school, interdistrict magnet school operator or supervisory agent of a nonpublic school shall offer employment to an applicant for a position, including any position which is contracted for, if such applicant would have direct student contact, prior to such board, council, operator or supervisory agent:

(1) Requiring of such applicant:

(A) To list the name, address and telephone number of each current or former employer of the applicant, if such current or former employer was a local or regional board of education, council, operator or supervisory agent or if such employment otherwise caused the applicant to have contact with children;

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(B) A written authorization that (i) consents to and authorizes disclosure by the employers listed under subparagraph (A) of this subdivision of the information requested under subdivision (2) of this subsection and the release of related records by such employers, (ii) consents to and authorizes disclosure by the Department of Education of the information requested under subdivision (3) of this subsection and the release of related records by the department, and (iii) releases those employers and the department from liability that may arise from such disclosure or release of records pursuant to subdivision (2) or (3) of this subsection; and

(C) A written statement of whether the applicant (i) has been or is the subject of an abuse or neglect or sexual misconduct investigation, or any investigation involving the injury or risk of injury to, or impairing the morals of, a minor under section 53-21, by any employer, state agency or municipal police department, [unless the investigation resulted in a finding that all allegations were unsubstantiated,] (ii) has ever been disciplined or asked to resign from employment or resigned from or otherwise separated from any employment while an allegation of abuse or neglect was pending or under investigation by the Department of Children and Families or such employer, state agency or municipal police department, or an allegation of sexual misconduct was pending or under investigation by such employer, state agency or municipal police department, or an allegation involving the injury or risk of injury to, or impairing the morals of, a minor under section 53-21, was pending or under investigation, or due to an allegation substantiated pursuant to section 17a-101g of abuse or neglect, or of sexual misconduct or a conviction for abuse or neglect or sexual misconduct, or (iii) has ever had a professional or occupational license or certificate suspended or revoked or has ever surrendered such a license or certificate while an allegation of abuse or neglect was pending or under investigation by the department or an investigation of sexual misconduct was pending or under investigation, or an allegation involving the injury or risk of

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injury to, or impairing the morals of, a minor under section 53-21, was pending or under investigation, or due to an allegation substantiated by the department of abuse or neglect or of sexual misconduct or a conviction for abuse or neglect or sexual misconduct;

(2) Conducting a review of the employment history of the applicant by contacting those employers listed by the applicant under subdivision (1) of this subsection. Such review shall be conducted using a form developed by the Department of Education in accordance with section 3 of public act 16-67 that shall request (A) the dates of employment of the applicant, and (B) a statement as to whether the employer has knowledge that the applicant (i) was or is the subject of an allegation of abuse or neglect or sexual misconduct for which there is an investigation pending with any employer, state agency or municipal police department or which has been substantiated, unless such substantiation has been reversed as a result of an appeal conducted pursuant to section 17a-101k; (ii) was disciplined or asked to resign from employment or resigned from or otherwise separated from any employment while an allegation of abuse or neglect or sexual misconduct was or is pending or under investigation, or due to a substantiation of abuse or neglect or sexual misconduct, unless such substantiation has been reversed as a result of an appeal conducted pursuant to section 17a-101k; or (iii) has ever had a professional or occupational license, certificate, authorization or permit suspended or revoked or has ever surrendered such a license, certificate, authorization or permit while an allegation of abuse or neglect or sexual misconduct was pending or under investigation, or due to a substantiation of abuse or neglect or sexual misconduct, unless such substantiation has been reversed as a result of an appeal conducted pursuant to section 17a-101k. Such review may be conducted telephonically or through written communication. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (g) of section 31-51i, not later than five business days after any such current or former employer of the applicant receives a request for such information, such employer shall respond with and is

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authorized to disclose such information. A local or regional board of education, council, operator or supervisory agent may request more information concerning any response made by a current or former employer, and, notwithstanding the provisions of said subsection (g), such employer shall respond not later than five business days after receiving such request; and

(3) Requesting information from the Department of Education concerning (A) the eligibility status for employment of any applicant for a position requiring a certificate, authorization or permit issued pursuant to chapter 166, (B) whether the department has knowledge that an investigation is pending or a finding has been substantiated by the Department of Children and Families pursuant to section 17a-101g of abuse or neglect or of sexual misconduct against the applicant and any information concerning such [a] investigation or finding, and (C) whether the department has received notification that the applicant has been convicted of a crime or of criminal charges pending against the applicant and any information concerning such charges.

(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (g) of section 31-51i, any local or regional board of education, council, operator or supervisory agent that receives information that an applicant for a position with or an employee of the board is under investigation or has been disciplined for a finding of abuse or neglect or sexual misconduct shall notify the Department of Education of such information.

(c) No local or regional board of education, council, operator or supervisory agent shall employ an applicant for a position involving direct student contact who does not comply with the provisions of subdivision (1) of subsection (a) of this section.

(d) A local or regional board of education, council, operator or supervisory agent may employ or contract with an applicant on a temporary basis for a period not to exceed ninety days, pending the

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review of information received under this section by such board, council, operator or supervisory agent, provided:

(1) The applicant complied with subdivision (1) of subsection (a) of this section;

(2) The board, council, operator or supervisory agent has no knowledge of information pertaining to the applicant that would disqualify the applicant from employment with the board, council, operator or supervisory agent; and

(3) The applicant affirms that the applicant is not disqualified from employment with such board, council, operator or supervisory agent.

(e) No local or regional board of education, council, operator or supervisory agent shall enter into a collective bargaining agreement, an employment contract, an agreement for resignation or termination, a severance agreement or any other contract or agreement or take any action that:

(1) Has the effect of suppressing or requiring the nondisclosure of information relating to [an] a pending investigation of a report of suspected abuse or neglect or sexual misconduct by a current or former employee;

(2) Affects the ability of the local or regional board of education, council, operator or supervisory agent to report suspected abuse or neglect or sexual misconduct to appropriate authorities; or

(3) Requires the local or regional board of education, council, operator or supervisory agent to expunge information about an allegation or a finding of suspected abuse or neglect or sexual misconduct from any documents maintained by the board, unless after investigation such allegation is [dismissed or] found to be false.

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(f) No local or regional board of education, council, operator or supervisory agent shall offer employment to a person as a substitute teacher, unless such person and such board, council, operator or supervisory agent comply with the provisions of subsection (a) of this section. The board, council, operator or supervisory agent shall determine which such persons are employable as substitute teachers and maintain a list of such persons. No board, council, operator or supervisory agent shall hire any person as a substitute teacher who is not on such list. Such person shall remain on such list as long as such person is continuously employed by the board, council, operator or supervisory agent as a substitute teacher, as described in subsection (c) of section 10-221d, provided the board, council, operator or supervisory agent does not have any knowledge of a reason that such person should be removed from such list.

(g) In the case of an applicant who is a contractor, the contractor shall require any employee with such contractor who would be in a position involving direct student contact to supply to such contractor all information required of an applicant under subparagraphs (A) and (C) of subdivision (1) of subsection (a) of this section and a written authorization under subparagraph (B) of said subdivision. Such contractor shall contact any current or former employer of such employee that was a local or regional board of education, council, operator or supervisory agent or if such employment caused the employee to have contact with children, and request, either telephonically or through written communication, any information concerning whether there is a pending or open investigation or was a finding of abuse or neglect or sexual misconduct against such employee. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (g) of section 31-51i, such employer shall report to the contractor any such investigation or finding, either telephonically or through written communication. If the contractor receives any information indicating such [a] investigation or finding or otherwise has knowledge of such [a] investigation or finding,

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the contractor shall, notwithstanding the provisions of said subsection (g), immediately forward such information to any local or regional board of education, council, operator or supervisory agent with which the contractor is under contract, either telephonically or through written communication. Any local or regional board of education, council, operator or supervisory agent that receives such information shall determine whether such employee may work in a position involving direct student contact at any school under the jurisdiction or control of such board, council, operator or supervisory agent. No determination by a local or regional board of education, council, operator or supervisory agent that any such employee shall not work under any such contract in any such position shall constitute a breach of such contract.

(h) Any applicant who knowingly provides false information or knowingly fails to disclose information required in subdivision (1) of subsection (a) of this section shall be subject to discipline by the employing local or regional board of education, council, operator or supervisory agent that may include (1) denial of employment, or (2) termination of the contract of a certified employee, in accordance with the provisions of section 10-151.

(i) Any employer who provides information in accordance with subdivision (2) of subsection (a) of this section or subsection (g) of this section and the Department of Education for the provision of information requested in accordance with subdivision (3) of said subsection (a) shall be immune from criminal and civil liability, provided the employer or department did not knowingly supply false information.

(j) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 10-151c and subsection (g) of section 31-51i, a local or regional board of education, council, operator or supervisory agent shall provide upon request by any other local or regional board of education, council, operator or supervisory

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agent for the purposes of an inquiry pursuant to subdivision (2) of subsection (a) of this section or subsection (g) of this section or to the Commissioner of Education pursuant to subsection (b) of this section any information that the board, council, operator or supervisory agent has concerning [a] an investigation or finding of abuse or neglect or sexual misconduct by a subject of any such inquiry.

(k) For purposes of this section and section 10-221d, as amended by this act, (1) "sexual misconduct" means any verbal, nonverbal, written or electronic communication, or any other act directed toward or with a student that is designed to establish a sexual relationship with the student, including a sexual invitation, dating or soliciting a date, engaging in sexual dialog, making sexually suggestive comments, self-disclosure or physical exposure of a sexual or erotic nature and any other sexual, indecent or erotic contact with a student; (2) "abuse or neglect" means abuse or neglect as described in section 46b-120, and includes any violation of section 53a-70, 53a-70a, 53a-71, 53a-72a, 53a-72b or 53a-73a; and (3) "former employer" means any local or regional board of education, governing council of a state or local charter school or interdistrict magnet school operator, person, firm, business, educational institution, nonprofit agency, corporation, limited liability company, the state, any political subdivision of the state, any governmental agency, or any other entity that such applicant was employed by during any of the previous twenty years prior to applying for a position with a local or regional board of education, governing council of a state or local charter school or interdistrict magnet school operator.

(l) Prior to offering employment to an applicant, a local or regional board of education, council, operator or supervisory agent shall make a documented good faith effort to contact each current and any former employer that was a local or regional board of education, council, operator or supervisory agent or if such employment otherwise caused

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the applicant to have contact with children of the applicant in order to obtain information and recommendations which may be relevant to the applicant's fitness for employment, including whether there is a pending investigation of the applicant for allegations of abuse or neglect or sexual misconduct, provided such effort shall not be construed to require more than three telephonic requests made on three separate days.

(m) No local or regional board of education, council, operator or supervisory agent shall offer employment to any applicant who had any previous employment contract terminated by a board, council, operator or supervisory agent or who resigned from such employment, if such [person] applicant (1) has been convicted of a violation of section 17a-101o, [when] or (2) has had an allegation of abuse or neglect or sexual [assault has been] misconduct substantiated.

Sec. 12. Subsection (f) of section 10-221d of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

(f) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (g) of section 31-51i, and to the extent permissible under state and federal laws regarding the dissemination of criminal history records, the State Board of Education shall, upon request of an eligible school operator, make available to such eligible school operator requesting information concerning an applicant for a position with such eligible school operator (1) any information concerning the applicant's eligibility for employment in a position with such eligible school operator requiring a certificate, authorization or permit issued pursuant to chapter 166, (2) whether the department has knowledge that the applicant has been disciplined for a finding of abuse or neglect or sexual misconduct, as defined in section 10-222c, as amended by this act, and any information concerning such a finding, [and] (3) whether the department has received notification that the applicant has been convicted of a crime or of criminal charges pending

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against the applicant and any information concerning such charges, and (4) whether the department has been notified pursuant to subsection (b) of section 10-222c, as amended by this act, that the applicant is under investigation or has been disciplined for a finding of abuse or neglect or sexual misconduct by a former employer, as defined in section 10-222c, as amended by this act, unless the investigation resulted in a finding that all allegations were false. The provisions of this subsection shall not be construed to cause the state board to investigate any such request or disseminate the results of any national criminal history records check.

Sec. 13. Subsection (f) of section 10-232a of the 2026 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

(f) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (g) of section 31-51i, and to the extent permissible under state and federal laws regarding the dissemination of criminal history records, the State Board of Education shall, upon request of a nongovernmental school operator, make available to such nongovernmental school operator requesting information concerning an applicant for a position with such nongovernmental school operator, (1) any information concerning the applicant's eligibility for employment in a position with such nongovernmental school operator requiring a certificate, authorization or permit issued pursuant to chapter 166, (2) whether the department has knowledge that the applicant has been disciplined for a finding of abuse or neglect or sexual misconduct, as defined in section 10-222c, as amended by this act, and any information concerning such a finding, [and] (3) whether the department has received notification that the applicant has been convicted of a crime or of criminal charges pending against the applicant and any information concerning such charges, and (4) whether the department has been notified pursuant to subsection (b) of section 10-222c, as amended by this act, that the applicant is under investigation or has been disciplined for a finding of abuse or neglect or

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sexual misconduct by a former employer, as defined in section 10-222c, as amended by this act, unless the investigation resulted in a finding that all allegations were false. The provisions of this subsection shall not be construed to cause the state board to investigate any such request or disseminate the results of any national criminal history records check.