



# House of Representatives

General Assembly

**File No. 380**

February Session, 2026

Substitute House Bill No. 5323

*House of Representatives, April 2, 2026*

The Committee on Education reported through REP. LEEPER of the 132nd Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

## ***AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES.***

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

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) On and after January 1, 2028,  
2 each school-based health center shall (1) use an evidence-based  
3 screening tool for early identification of disordered eating behaviors, as  
4 a supplement to existing methods used to diagnose disordered eating  
5 behaviors, and (2) provide such screening tool to each patient who is in  
6 grades six to twelve, inclusive, during such patient's annual health  
7 assessment, including, but not limited to, the health assessments  
8 conducted pursuant to section 10-206 of the general statutes. Such  
9 patient or such patient's parent or guardian may, in such patient's or  
10 parent or guardian's discretion, complete such screening tool.

11 Sec. 2. (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a task force to  
12 develop recommendations for the early identification, awareness and  
13 treatment of disordered eating behaviors in children, including, but not  
14 limited to, recommendations for an evidence-based screening tool for

15 use in school-based health centers pursuant to section 1 of this act.

16 (b) The task force shall consist of the following members:

17 (1) The executive director of the Commission on Women, Children,  
18 Seniors, Equity and Opportunity, or the executive director's designee;

19 (2) The Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee;

20 (3) The Commissioner of Public Health, or the commissioner's  
21 designee;

22 (4) The Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services, or  
23 the commissioner's designee;

24 (5) The Child Advocate, or the Child Advocate's designee;

25 (6) The Comptroller, or the Comptroller's designee;

26 (7) The executive director of the Connecticut Association of Public  
27 School Superintendents, or the executive director's designee;

28 (8) The executive director of the Connecticut Association of Boards of  
29 Education, or the executive director's designee;

30 (9) The executive director of the Connecticut Association of School-  
31 Based Health Centers, or the executive director's designee;

32 (10) The chief executive officer of the United Way of Connecticut, or  
33 the chief executive officer's designee;

34 (11) The chief executive officer of the Connecticut Hospital  
35 Association, or the chief executive officer's designee;

36 (12) A member of the Transforming Children's Behavioral Health  
37 Policy and Planning Committee, established pursuant to section 2-137  
38 of the general statutes, appointed jointly by the chairpersons of the  
39 committee; and

40 (13) Any additional members with expertise in eating disorder

41 prevention, screening and early identification or any related services, as  
42 appointed by the executive director of the Commission on Women,  
43 Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity.

44 (c) Any member of the task force appointed under subdivisions (7) to  
45 (13), inclusive, of subsection (b) of this section may be a member of the  
46 General Assembly.

47 (d) All initial appointments to the task force shall be made not later  
48 than thirty days after the effective date of this section. Any vacancy shall  
49 be filled by the appointing authority.

50 (e) The chairperson of the task force shall be the executive director of  
51 the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and  
52 Opportunity, or the executive director's designee. Such chairperson  
53 shall schedule the first meeting of the task force, which shall be held not  
54 later than sixty days after the effective date of this section.

55 (f) The administrative staff of the joint standing committee of the  
56 General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education  
57 shall serve as administrative staff of the task force.

58 (g) Not later than January 1, 2028, the task force shall submit a report  
59 on its findings and recommendations to the joint standing committees  
60 of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to  
61 education and public health, in accordance with the provisions of  
62 section 11-4a of the general statutes. The task force shall terminate on  
63 the date that it submits such report or January 1, 2028, whichever is later.

64 Sec. 3. (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a Holistic Food  
65 Education Working Group to develop a state-wide food education  
66 roadmap and a model school nutrition curriculum that includes, but is  
67 not limited to, developmentally appropriate evidence-based education  
68 programs on disordered eating behaviors, nutrition, culinary skills,  
69 growing food, food safety and food systems.

70 (b) The working group shall consist of the following members:

- 71 (1) The executive director of the Commission on Women, Children,  
72 Seniors, Equity and Opportunity, or the executive director's designee;
- 73 (2) The Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee;
- 74 (3) The Commissioner of Public Health, or the commissioner's  
75 designee;
- 76 (4) The Commissioner of Aging and Disability Services, or the  
77 commissioner's designee;
- 78 (5) The Commissioner of Social Services, or the commissioner's  
79 designee;
- 80 (6) The Commissioner of Agriculture, or the commissioner's  
81 designee;
- 82 (7) The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection, or  
83 the commissioner's designee;
- 84 (8) At least one representative representing each of the following  
85 extension programs at The University of Connecticut, appointed by the  
86 president of the university: Community nutrition, sustainable food  
87 systems, 4-H, master gardeners and food safety;
- 88 (9) The executive director of the Connecticut Association of Public  
89 School Superintendents, or the executive director's designee;
- 90 (10) The executive director of the Connecticut Association of Boards  
91 of Education, or the executive director's designee;
- 92 (11) The president of the School Nutrition Association of Connecticut,  
93 or the president's designee;
- 94 (12) The president of the Connecticut Academy of Nutrition and  
95 Dietetics, or the president's designee;
- 96 (13) The chief executive officer of the Area Agencies on Aging, or the  
97 chief executive officer's designee;

98 (14) At least one each of the following, appointed by the executive  
99 director of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and  
100 Opportunity: (A) Public school educator in the state, (B) student in  
101 grades nine to twelve, inclusive, in the state, (C) representative from a  
102 community-based nonprofit that provides food or nutrition education,  
103 (D) representative from a medical school in the state who teaches  
104 nutrition, and (E) parent of a public school student in the state; and

105 (15) Any additional members with expertise in eating disorder  
106 prevention and nutrition education or any related services, as appointed  
107 by the executive director of the Commission on Women, Children,  
108 Seniors, Equity and Opportunity.

109 (c) Any member of the working group appointed under subdivisions  
110 (8) to (15), inclusive, of subsection (b) of this section may be a member  
111 of the General Assembly.

112 (d) All initial appointments to the working group shall be made not  
113 later than thirty days after the effective date of this section. Any vacancy  
114 shall be filled by the appointing authority.

115 (e) The executive director of the Commission on Women, Children,  
116 Seniors, Equity and Opportunity shall select cochairpersons of the  
117 working group from among the members of the working group. Such  
118 cochairpersons shall schedule the first meeting of the working group,  
119 which shall be held not later than sixty days after the effective date of  
120 this section.

121 (f) The administrative staff of the joint standing committee of the  
122 General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education  
123 shall serve as administrative staff of the working group.

124 (g) Not later than January 1, 2028, the working group shall submit a  
125 report on its findings and recommendations to the joint standing  
126 committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters  
127 relating to education, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a  
128 of the general statutes. The working group shall terminate on the date

129 that it submits such report or January 1, 2028, whichever is later.

130 Sec. 4. (*Effective from passage*) (a) Notwithstanding any provision of  
131 the general statutes or any public or special act, the Auditors of Public  
132 Accounts shall conduct an audit of the financial operations of the  
133 dissolved regional board of education for the former regional school  
134 district six for the school year ending June 30, 2024, and for any expenses  
135 incurred by or in the name of such regional board of education  
136 thereafter. Not later than October 1, 2026, the Auditors of Public  
137 Accounts shall submit such audit report to the chief executive officer of  
138 each of the three member towns of former regional school district six.

139 (b) The chief executive officer of each member town of former  
140 regional school district six shall pay any outstanding expenses owed by  
141 such regional board of education, and such expenses shall be allocated  
142 in accordance with the provisions of subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of  
143 section 10-51 of the general statutes, except such chief executive officers  
144 may agree to divide such expenses in any alternate manner.

145 Sec. 5. (*Effective from passage*) Notwithstanding any provision of the  
146 general statutes or any public or special act, the Auditors of Public  
147 Accounts shall conduct an audit of the financial operations of the  
148 dissolved local board of education for the town of Litchfield for the  
149 school year ending June 30, 2024, and for any expenses incurred by or  
150 in the name of such local board of education thereafter. Not later than  
151 October 1, 2026, the Auditors of Public Accounts shall submit such audit  
152 report to the chief executive officer of the town of Litchfield.

153 Sec. 6. Section 10-244a of the general statutes is repealed and the  
154 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

155 (a) For the school year commencing July 1, 2013, and each school year  
156 thereafter, no municipality or local or regional board of education may  
157 employ or enter into an agreement, as described in subdivision (2) of  
158 subsection (b) of section 53a-217b, with any person, other than a sworn  
159 member of an organized local police department or a retired [police]  
160 officer as provided in subsection (b) of this section, to provide security

161 services in a public school if such person will possess a firearm, as  
162 defined in section 53a-3, while in the performance of his or her duties.

163 (b) A municipality or a local or regional board of education may  
164 employ or enter into an agreement with a retired [police] officer to  
165 provide security services in a public school if such retired [police] officer  
166 is a (1) qualified retired law enforcement officer, as defined in 18 USC  
167 926C, as amended from time to time, or (2) parole officer who (A) served  
168 as a parole officer for an aggregate of ten years or more, or separated  
169 from such service, after completing any applicable probationary period,  
170 due to a service-connected disability, as determined by the Department  
171 of Correction, (B) during the most recent twelve-month period, has met,  
172 at the expense of such parole officer, the standards for qualification in  
173 firearms training for active parole officers, as determined by the  
174 Department of Correction, (C) has not been found by a qualified medical  
175 professional to be unqualified, for reasons relating to mental health, to  
176 meet the active duty standards for qualification in firearms training, as  
177 established by the Department of Correction, to carry a firearm and has  
178 not entered an agreement with the department acknowledging that such  
179 parole officer does not meet such qualification, (D) is not under the  
180 influence of alcohol or another intoxicating or hallucinatory drug or  
181 substance, and (E) is not prohibited by law from receiving a firearm.  
182 Such retired [police] officer shall receive annual training pursuant to  
183 section 7-294x and shall successfully complete annual firearms training  
184 provided by a certified firearms instructor that meets or exceeds the  
185 standards of the Police Officer Standards and Training Council or 18  
186 USC 926C, as amended from time to time. Such retired [police] officer  
187 shall not be subject to the licensing requirements of part II of chapter  
188 534.

189 (c) For the purposes of subsection (b) of this section, ["retired police  
190 officer"] (1) "retired officer" means [(1)] (A) a sworn member of an  
191 organized local police department who was certified by the Police  
192 Officer Standards and Training Council and retired or separated in good  
193 standing from such department or a sworn member of the Division of  
194 State Police within the Department of Emergency Services and Public

195 Protection who retired or separated in good standing from said division,  
196 [(2)] (B) a sworn federal law enforcement agent who retired or separated  
197 in good standing from such federal law enforcement service and who  
198 meets or exceeds the standards of the Police Officer Standards and  
199 Training Council for certification in this state, [or (3)] (C) a sworn officer  
200 of an organized police department in another state who was certified  
201 under standards that meet or exceed the standards of the Police Officer  
202 Standards and Training Council for certification in this state and who  
203 retired or separated in good standing from such department, or (D) a  
204 parole officer who retired or separated in good standing from the  
205 Department of Correction, and (2) "good standing" means the status of  
206 a police officer whose employment in a law enforcement unit, as defined  
207 in section 7-294a, or a parole officer whose employment with the  
208 Department of Correction, terminated for a reason other than as a result  
209 of disciplinary action or during a period other than when such police  
210 officer or parole officer was under investigation or disciplinary action  
211 was pending.

212       Sec. 7. (Effective July 1, 2026) (a) The Connecticut Advisory Council for  
213 School Administrator Professional Standards, established pursuant to  
214 section 10-144e of the general statutes, in consultation with the  
215 Connecticut Association of Schools, shall establish a pilot program for a  
216 new school administrator mentorship program. Such pilot program  
217 shall include, but need not be limited to, supports, training and  
218 professional development for new school administrators. Not later than  
219 July 1, 2027, the council shall report the plan for implementation of the  
220 pilot program to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly  
221 having cognizance of matters relating to education, in accordance with  
222 the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes.

223       (b) For the school year commencing July 1, 2027, the Connecticut  
224 Advisory Council for School Administrator Professional Standards shall  
225 implement the pilot program in school districts identified in the plan  
226 developed pursuant to subsection (a) of this section. Not later than  
227 January 1, 2029, the council shall report on the results of the pilot  
228 program, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the

229 general statutes, to the joint standing committee of the General  
230 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education. Such  
231 report shall include, but need not be limited to, recommendations for  
232 improvement to and requirements for the further implementation of the  
233 pilot program.

234 Sec. 8. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) Not later than July 1, 2027, each  
235 local or regional board of education shall require students in grades nine  
236 to twelve, inclusive, who participate in any extracurricular activity,  
237 including, but not limited to, after-school clubs, student publications or  
238 intramural and interscholastic athletics, to meet the academic eligibility  
239 standards established by the Connecticut Association of Schools and the  
240 Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference.

241 Sec. 9. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) The Department of Education  
242 shall, within available appropriations, establish a grant program for the  
243 provision of a therapeutic arts program in public schools for the school  
244 year commencing July 1, 2027, and each school year thereafter. Such  
245 grant shall be in an amount determined by the Commissioner of  
246 Education and available to any local or regional board of education or  
247 regional educational service center interested in providing a therapeutic  
248 arts program, but the department shall prioritize boards of education or  
249 regional educational service centers serving school districts with a high  
250 rate of exclusionary discipline, lack of access to behavioral health  
251 services and supports and an existing social-emotional learning  
252 program. Not later than January 1, 2027, the department shall post in a  
253 conspicuous location on its Internet web site information about the  
254 grant program, including, but not limited to, eligibility criteria,  
255 application forms and the amount of grant funds available to applicants.

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

262 Sec. 10. Section 10-150b of the general statutes is repealed and the  
263 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

264 (a) There is established the Connecticut Educator Preparation and  
265 Certification Board. The board shall be responsible for modernizing and  
266 aligning educator preparation and certification to ensure that policies  
267 are optimized to attract and retain effective and diverse professionals  
268 for employment in the state's public schools.

269 (b) The board shall develop standards and proposals for regulations  
270 or legislation relating to educator preparation and certification. Such  
271 standards and proposals shall reflect the teaching profession and  
272 respond to emerging understandings of effective, evidence-based  
273 practices and address the following objectives: (1) Building streamlined,  
274 flexible pathways in the educator profession that are grounded in a  
275 commitment to educator effectiveness, (2) enabling educators to  
276 broaden their scope of practice to meet more students' needs, (3)  
277 ensuring educator preparation programs are accountable for both the  
278 quality training experiences and outcomes for candidates, (4) creating a  
279 system to help educators continuously improve their practice that  
280 supports and rewards educators who demonstrate mastery, (5)  
281 supporting improved data transparency regarding the state's  
282 distribution of educators and educator vacancies and accountability for  
283 remedying observed inequities, and (6) treating educators as  
284 professionals and lifelong learners who need access to high-quality  
285 professional learning and mentorships throughout their careers.

286 (c) The board shall consist of the following members:

287 (1) Four public school classroom teachers, who are classroom  
288 teachers at the time of their appointment and throughout their term on  
289 the board, as follows:

290 (A) Two appointed by the Connecticut Education Association, one of  
291 whom is a teacher for students in grades kindergarten to grade six,  
292 inclusive, and one of whom is a high school teacher;

293 (B) One appointed by the American Federation of Teachers-  
294 Connecticut, one of whom is a special education teacher; and

295 (C) One appointed by the Connecticut Teacher of the Year Council.

296 (2) Three representatives from an educator preparation program  
297 approved by the State Board of Education, as follows:

298 (A) One appointed by the American Association of Colleges for  
299 Teacher Education Connecticut Chapter, who is a representative from  
300 an educator preparation program offered by a public institution of  
301 higher education;

302 (B) One appointed by the Connecticut Conference of Independent  
303 Colleges; and

304 (C) One appointed by the Commissioner of Education, who is a  
305 representative of an alternate route to certification program.

306 (3) Three administrators, who are employed by a local or regional  
307 board of education, as follows:

308 (A) One appointed by the Connecticut Association of Public School  
309 Superintendents, who is a superintendent of schools for an urban school  
310 district;

311 (B) One appointed by the Connecticut Association of Schools, who  
312 represents a rural school district; and

313 (C) One appointed by the Connecticut Federation of School  
314 Administrators, who represents a suburban school district.

315 (4) One appointed by the Connecticut Association of Boards of  
316 Education.

317 (5) One appointed by the Connecticut Business and Industry  
318 Association, who is a representative from the education and workforce  
319 affiliate of the association.

320 (6) A representative from the Increasing Educator Diversity Policy  
321 Oversight Council, established pursuant to section 10-156bb, designated  
322 by the council.

323 (7) The Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee.

324 (8) The Commissioner of Early Childhood, or the commissioner's  
325 designee.

326 (9) The superintendent of the Technical Education and Career  
327 System, or the superintendent's designee.

328 (d) All initial appointments to the board shall be made not later than  
329 August 1, 2024. Any vacancy shall be filled by the appointing authority  
330 not later than ten days following such vacancy. Members shall serve  
331 three-year terms.

332 (e) The chairperson and vice chairperson of the board shall be elected  
333 from among the voting members of the board. The board shall establish  
334 bylaws for the operation and management of the board. An employee  
335 of the Department of Education shall be designated by the  
336 Commissioner of Education to serve as the administrator of the board.

337 (f) Not later than January 1, [2026] 2027, and annually thereafter, the  
338 board shall develop an annual report that includes a detailed summary  
339 of the substance and disposition of any standards and proposals for  
340 regulations or legislation developed by the board or the State Board of  
341 Education pursuant to section 10-150c. The board shall submit such  
342 annual report to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly  
343 having cognizance of matters relating to education, in accordance with  
344 the provisions of section 11-4a.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 3	<i>from passage</i>	New section

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Sec. 4	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 5	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 6	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	10-244a
Sec. 7	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 8	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 9	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 10	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	10-150b

**Statement of Legislative Commissioners:**

In Sections 2(b)(13) and 3(b)(15), "designated" was changed to "appointed" for consistency and in Section 6(c)(2), "was terminated" was changed to "terminated" and "during a period when" was changed to "during a period other than when" for clarity.

**ED**      *Joint Favorable Subst.*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

**OFA Fiscal Note**

**State Impact:**

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 27 \$	FY 28 \$
Auditors	GF - Cost	500,000 to 750,000	None
Education, Dept.	GF - Cost	None	See Below

Note: GF=General Fund

**Municipal Impact:**

Municipalities	Effect	FY 27 \$	FY 28 \$
Local and Regional School Districts	Revenue Gain	None	See Below
Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs)	Revenue Gain	None	See Below

**Explanation**

The bill makes various changes to education statutes, resulting in a cost of \$500,000 to \$750,000 to the Auditors of Public Accounts (APA) in FY 27 and costs to the State Department of Education (SDE) beginning in FY 28. The fiscal impacts are described by section below.

**Section 1** requires school-based health centers to use an evidence-based screening tool for the early identification of disordered eating behavior and to provide that screening tool to certain patients during their annual health assessment, resulting in no fiscal impact.

**Sections 2 and 3** establish: (1) a task force to develop recommendations for identification and treatment of eating disorders in children; and (2) a working group to develop a state-wide food education roadmap and model school nutrition curriculum. These

sections do not result in a fiscal impact as the task force and working group have the necessary expertise to meet the requirements.

**Sections 4 and 5** require the APA to conduct an audit for the dissolved regional board of education (former regional school district six) and the dissolved local board of education for the town of Litchfield by October 1, 2026, resulting in a cost to the state. The APA does not have the resources required to meet the requirements of the bill and will have to hire a consultant for an approximate cost of \$500,000 to \$750,000 in FY 27. The exact cost is dependent on the responses to the RFP.

**Section 6** allows retired parole officers that meet specific conditions to provide armed security services in public schools. This has no fiscal impact as it is not expected to change security costs incurred by school districts or municipalities.

**Section 7** requires the Connecticut Advisory Council for School Administrator Professional Standards to: (1) create a plan by July 1, 2027 for implementing a pilot program for a new school administrator mentorship program; and (2) implement the pilot program in school districts in FY 28. This results in a potential cost in FY 28 to SDE that is dependent on the provisions of the pilot program upon implementation.

**Section 8** has no fiscal impact. It requires high school students that participate in extracurricular activities to meet the academic standards set by the Connecticut Association of Schools and the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletics Conference (CIAC).

**Section 9** requires SDE to establish a grant program for schools to provide therapeutic arts programs beginning in FY 28. The cost to SDE, and corresponding revenue to school districts and Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs), depends on the funding provided and provisions of the grant program. When awarding grants, SDE is required to give priority to districts and RESCs that have a high rate of exclusionary discipline and lack access to behavioral health supports.

**Section 10** has no fiscal impact. It extends the reporting date for the

Connecticut Education Preparation and Certification Board's first annual report by one year.

***The Out Years***

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to inflation.

## OLR Bill Analysis

### sHB 5323

## **AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES.**

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#### SUMMARY

#### §§ 1 & 2 — DISORDERED EATING TASK FORCE AND SCREENING TOOL

*Creates a task force to develop recommendations on disordered eating in children, including recommending an evidence-based screening tool; requires school-based health centers to give the tool to patients in grades 6 to 12 during their annual health assessment*

#### § 3 — HOLISTIC FOOD EDUCATION WORKING GROUP

*Creates a working group to develop a statewide food education road map and model school nutrition curriculum*

#### §§ 4 & 5 — REGION 6 AND LITCHFIELD AUDIT

*Requires (1) the Auditors of Public Accounts to audit the financial operations of former regional district 6 and the former Litchfield district and (2) member towns of former region 6 to pay outstanding expenses owed by the former board*

#### § 6 — ARMED SECURITY GUARDS

*Allows retired parole officers meeting specified criteria to provide armed security services in public schools; prohibits police and probation officers who left employment during an investigation or after disciplinary action from providing armed security services in schools*

#### § 7 — SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

*Requires the Advisory Council for School Administrator Professional Standards to create a new school administrator mentorship pilot program*

#### § 8 — ACADEMIC STANDARDS FOR EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

*Requires students in grades 9-12 who participate in extracurricular activities to meet CIAC and CAS academic eligibility standards*

#### § 9 — THERAPEUTIC ARTS PROGRAM GRANTS

*Requires SDE to create a grant program, within available appropriations, for a therapeutic arts program in public schools starting in the 2027-28 school year*

#### § 10 — CONNECTICUT EDUCATION PREPARATION AND CERTIFICATION BOARD (CEPCB)

*Extends the deadline for CEPCB's first annual report by one year*

**SUMMARY**

This bill makes several unrelated changes to education laws. A section-by-section analysis follows.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026, except provisions on the task force (§ 2), working group (§ 3), and audits (§§ 4 & 5) are effective upon passage.

**§§ 1 & 2 — DISORDERED EATING TASK FORCE AND SCREENING TOOL**

*Creates a task force to develop recommendations on disordered eating in children, including recommending an evidence-based screening tool; requires school-based health centers to give the tool to patients in grades 6 to 12 during their annual health assessment*

**Task Force**

The bill creates a task force to develop recommendations on early identification, awareness, and treatment of disordered eating in children, including recommending an evidence-based screening tool for school-based health centers to use (see below).

The task force must have the following 12 members (or, generally, their designees):

1. the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity (CWCSEO) executive director;
2. the commissioners of education, public health, and mental health and addiction services;
3. the child advocate;
4. the comptroller;
5. the executive directors of the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE), and Connecticut Association of School-Based Health Centers;
6. the chief executive officers of the United Way of Connecticut and

the Connecticut Hospital Association; and

7. a member of the Transforming Children’s Behavioral Health Policy and Planning Committee, appointed jointly by the committee’s chairpersons.

The bill requires the CWCSEO executive director or her designee to be the task force’s chairperson and allows the chairperson to appoint additional members with expertise in eating disorders. It also (1) allows the non-executive branch task force members to be legislators and (2) requires the Education Committee’s administrative staff to serve the task force.

Initial appointments must be made within 30 days after the bill takes effect, and vacancies must be filled by the appointing authority. The chairperson must schedule the first meeting and hold it within 60 days after the bill takes effect.

The bill requires the task force to submit a report, by January 1, 2028, to the Education and Public Health committees with its findings and recommendations. The task force ends on this date or on the date it submits its report, whichever is later.

### **Screening Tool at School-Based Health Centers**

Starting January 1, 2028, the bill requires each school-based health center to use an evidence-based screening tool for early identification of disordered eating to supplement existing methods for diagnosing disordered eating. School-based health centers must give the screening tool to each patient in grades 6 to 12 during the patient’s annual health assessment, and the patient (or their parent or guardian) may complete the screening tool at their discretion.

## **§ 3 — HOLISTIC FOOD EDUCATION WORKING GROUP**

*Creates a working group to develop a statewide food education road map and model school nutrition curriculum*

The bill creates a Holistic Food Education Working Group to develop a statewide roadmap and model school nutrition curriculum that

includes developmentally appropriate, evidence-based education programs on disordered eating behaviors, nutrition, culinary skills, growing food, food safety, and food systems.

The working group must have the following members (or, generally, their designees):

1. the CWCSEO executive director;
2. the commissioners of aging and disability services, agriculture, education, energy and environmental protection, public health, and social services;
3. one representative from each of four specified UConn extension programs (community nutrition, sustainable food systems, 4-H, and master gardeners and food safety), appointed by the UConn president;
4. the executive directors of CAPSS, CAFE, the School Nutrition Association of Connecticut, the Connecticut Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, and the Area Agencies on Aging; and
5. other members appointed by CWCSEO.

The bill requires the CWCSEO executive director to appoint at least one of each of the following:

1. a public school educator,
2. a student in grade 9 to 12,
3. a representative from a community-based nonprofit that provides food or nutrition education,
4. a representative from a medical school in the state who teaches nutrition, and
5. a parent of a public school student in the state.

The bill requires the CWCSEO executive director to choose the

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working group's co-chairpersons from among its members and allows her to appoint additional members with expertise related to eating disorder prevention and nutrition education. It also (1) allows the non-executive branch working group members to be legislators and (2) requires the Education Committee's administrative staff to serve the working group.

Initial appointments must be made within 30 days after the bill takes effect, and vacancies must be filled by the appointing authority. The chairpersons must schedule the first meeting and hold it within 60 days after the bill takes effect.

The bill requires the working group to submit a report, by January 1, 2028, to the Education Committee with its findings and recommendations. The task force ends on this date or on the date it submits its report, whichever is later.

#### **§§ 4 & 5 — REGION 6 AND LITCHFIELD AUDIT**

*Requires (1) the Auditors of Public Accounts to audit the financial operations of former regional district 6 and the former Litchfield district and (2) member towns of former region 6 to pay outstanding expenses owed by the former board*

The bill requires the Auditors of Public Accounts to audit the financial operations of former regional district 6 and the former Litchfield school district for the 2023-24 school year and any expenses they incurred after that. They must do so by October 1, 2026, and submit the report to the chief executive officers of the three member towns of former region 6 (Goshen, Morris, and Warren) and Litchfield, as applicable.

The bill requires the former region 6 member towns to pay any outstanding expenses the regional school board owes, allocated to each town proportionately based on the town's share of students.

#### **§ 6 — ARMED SECURITY GUARDS**

*Allows retired parole officers meeting specified criteria to provide armed security services in public schools; prohibits police and probation officers who left employment during an investigation or after disciplinary action from providing armed security services in schools*

Current law limits who a municipality or school board can hire or

contract with for armed school security services in a public school to (1) sworn members of local police departments and (2) qualified retired police officers who left in good standing. The bill (1) additionally allows former parole officers meeting specified criteria to provide these services and (2) defines “good standing.”

### ***Parole Officers***

By law, to serve as an armed school security officer, a retired police officer must be a “qualified retired law enforcement officer” under the federal Law Enforcement Officers Safety Act (LEOSA). (LEOSA permits qualified officers, both active and retired, to carry a concealed firearm across state lines so long as they are carrying the proper identification and meet the statutory requirements.) Under the bill, parole officers must meet comparable requirements in order to qualify to provide armed school security services.

The bill allows municipalities or school boards to hire a former parole officer to provide armed security services if the officer:

1. served as a parole officer for at least 10 years or separated from service, after completing any probationary period, due to a service-connected disability, as determined by the Department of Correction (DOC);
2. has met the DOC-determined qualification standards for active patrol officer firearm training in the last 12 months, at the officer’s expense;
3. has not been found unqualified, due to mental health, to meet these firearm training standards by a mental health professional and has not entered an agreement with DOC indicating that he or she does not meet the standards;
4. is not under the influence of alcohol or another intoxicating or hallucinatory drug or substance; and
5. is not prohibited by law from receiving a firearm.

The bill subjects these former parole officers to the same annual training requirements that other retired officers must complete in order to qualify (school security training provided by the Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POST) and firearms training provided by a certified firearms instructor who meets or exceeds the POST standards or the LEOSA standards). Under the bill, these former parole officers are also exempt from the licensing requirements for private security officers, just as current law provides for retired police officers serving as armed school security officers.

### ***Good Standing***

Under existing law, to be hired as armed school security, former officers must have retired or separated from service in good standing. Under the bill, this means that the officer did not leave his or her employment with a state or local law enforcement unit or DOC (1) due to disciplinary action or (2) while under investigation or while a disciplinary action was pending. (The bill does not define “good standing” for federal law enforcement officers or officers from another state.)

### ***Background — Related Bill***

SB 402, favorably reported by the Public Safety and Security Committee, disqualifies anyone who is prohibited from being hired by a law enforcement unit from being eligible to provide armed school security services as a retired police officer.

## **§ 7 — SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR MENTORSHIP PROGRAM**

*Requires the Advisory Council for School Administrator Professional Standards to create a new school administrator mentorship pilot program*

The bill requires the Connecticut Advisory Council for School Administrator Professional Standards, in consultation with the Connecticut Association of Schools, to create a pilot program for a new school administrator mentorship program. The pilot program must include supports, training, and professional development for new school administrators.

The council must submit a pilot program implementation plan to the

Education Committee by July 1, 2027, and implement the program for the 2027-28 school year in the districts it identifies in the plan. By January 1, 2029, the council must report to the Education Committee on the pilot's results, including recommended improvements and requirements for further implementation.

## **§ 8 — ACADEMIC STANDARDS FOR EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

*Requires students in grades 9-12 who participate in extracurricular activities to meet CIAC and CAS academic eligibility standards*

Starting July 1, 2027, the bill requires school boards to require students in grades 9 to 12 who participate in extracurricular activities to meet academic eligibility standards established by the Connecticut Association of Schools and the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CAS-CIAC). This includes students who participate in after-school clubs, student publications, intramural athletics, and interscholastic athletics.

In practice, CAS-CIAC standards apply to student activities it administers. The current CAS-CIAC standards applicable to interscholastic athletics generally require students to have earned a passing grade in at least four quarter credits at the end of the most recent marking period or, for fall sports, at least four credits toward graduation during the prior school year or marking period. These standards act as a minimum standard for all schools and they allow school boards to set higher or additional standards for participation.

## **§ 9 — THERAPEUTIC ARTS PROGRAM GRANTS**

*Requires SDE to create a grant program, within available appropriations, for a therapeutic arts program in public schools starting in the 2027-28 school year*

The bill requires the State Department of Education (SDE) to establish, within available appropriations, a grant program for a therapeutic arts program in public schools starting in the 2027-28 school year. Any school board or Regional Education Service Center (RESC) is eligible for grants, but SDE must prioritize school boards and RESCs that serve school districts with high rates of exclusionary discipline (like suspensions), low access to behavioral health services, and an existing

social-emotional learning program.

By January 1, 2027, SDE must determine the grant amounts and post information on its website about the program, eligibility criteria, and available grant funds. Starting by July 1, 2028, SDE must annually report to the Education Committee on the number of grants awarded and their recipients.

**§ 10 — CONNECTICUT EDUCATION PREPARATION AND CERTIFICATION BOARD (CEPCB)**

*Extends the deadline for CEPCB’s first annual report by one year*

By law, CEPCB is responsible for developing standards and proposals related to educator preparation and certification, including developing flexible certification pathways and creating systems to help educators broaden their scope of practice, among other things.

CEPCB is required to annually report on standards and proposals for legislation or regulations that it or the State Board of Education develops. The bill extends the deadline for CEPCB’s first annual report by one year, from January 1, 2026, to January 1, 2027.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 45    Nay 0    (03/16/2026)