

# Education Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No:** HB-5327 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE DISCLOSURE OF AN OPEN INVESTIGATION OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT OR SEXUAL MISCONDUCT, INJURY OR RISK OF INJURY TO OR IMPAIRING THE MORALS OF A MINOR DURING THE HIRING

**Title:** PROCESS OF A SCHOOL EMPLOYEE.

**Vote Date:** 3/16/2026

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/4/2026

**File No.:** 381

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

### REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would authorize any former employer the ability to notify a hiring school district of any open or pending investigations of abuse, neglect, or sexual misconduct of an applicant for a position within the hiring school district. This comes to the legislature after a student at Darien High was allegedly inappropriately touched by their teacher, who had a history of alleged inappropriate conduct with students in another district and at multiple schools. The legislature hopes that by adopting this legislation, school districts will be able to make more informed decisions about teaching personnel to protect students.

### SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

Expands the bill to include additional provisions related to injury or risk of injury to a minor, and conduct impairing a minor's morals.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Connecticut State Department of Education, Charlene Tucker, Commissioner submitted testimony in support of this legislation noting that it would expand the obligation of potential educational employers being advised whether applicants were currently the subject of an investigation. She noted that it is a commonsense expansion as it is designed to provide educational employers with a greater ability to make informed choices in hiring and thereby providing students with grater safeguards against potential neglect or abuse.

Office of the Child Advocate, Christina Ghio, Acting Child Advocate submitted testimony in support of this legislation sharing that in 2016, the state created a process to protect children from people who pose a safety risk to children from leaving one school district under suspicion only to be hired by other school districts. She stated that recent news stories have raised concerns that gaps still exist. She noted that this legislation attempts to close some of those gaps by expanding disclosures to include pending investigations by the employer, state agency, or municipal police department. She encourages the committee to consider clarifying that when hiring school resource officers, the list of current or former employers and the list from whom the school must obtain the employment verification forms include state and local police departments.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

Darien Public Schools, Eric Byrne, Superintendent of Schools submitted testimony in support of this legislation sharing that it is an essential step toward ensuring that future employing school districts have critical information made available to them about an applicant's background as they decide whom to entrust with the care of students. He stated that the state's legislation has evolved to help guarantee that schools are receiving robust information about an applicant's background before they make hiring decisions like gathering an applicant's history of abuse, neglect, or sexual misconduct. Superintendent Byrne shared that existing law does not go far enough to protect students and avoid serious breakdowns in the hiring process. He expressed that this legislation would help close a loophole related to investigations of abuse, neglect, or sexual misconduct that are pending at the time an applicant seeks employment in another school district.

Omnia Ali submitted testimony in support of this legislation sharing she is the mother of a student who is epileptic and was touched inappropriately by her teacher. She stated that her daughter was falsely accused of cheating and after submitting a statement to the superintendent, the school offered for her to retake her exam, which stressed her daughter and triggered her seizures. She noted she fears her daughters being bullied or harassed at schools.

Thomas Childs submitted testimony in support of this legislation sharing that children's safety is one of the most important responsibilities of the government. He pointed out that school resource officers in the state have a higher standard on disclosures about investigations than teachers do. He stated that school resource officers would be excluded from being hired if they had resigned "during" an investigation of misconduct, and pointed out that if the same were for teachers, a painful incident in Darien could have been prevented. He expressed that teachers should be held to that same standard, so Connecticut schools have complete information available to assess a teacher during the hiring process. He said that police officers and teachers are both so important to the wellbeing of a community and while privacy is important, he does not understand why the standard between those two professions would be different.

Cara Gately submitted testimony in support of this legislation sharing that it is a simple straightforward bill that will close loopholes that allow school districts to pass along teachers who harm, abuse, or neglect students to other districts without disclosing material facts

known to them. Cara stated that pre-employment screening is crucial in all sectors but especially in the education field.

Avery Little submitted testimony in support of this legislation sharing she is a sophomore at Darien High School and wants to feel safe with all her teachers. She stated that school districts should have all the information about potential employees who are working directly with children, and we need to close all loopholes that allow predators into school environments.

Aaron Morabito submitted testimony in support of this legislation sharing that students must feel safe and comfortable in their learning environment in order to be successful. He noted that a student's sense of belonging, and safety is directly tied to their ability to focus and commit to their learning, and they cannot learn and grow if their bodies are constantly in fight-or-flight. Aaron stated that our youth deserve to be in environments free from the risk of sexual misconduct, discrimination, or violence. He expressed we have a responsibility to provide guidance and support to students who have engaged in violent behavior or sexual misconduct, and we cannot leave them in the dust, as they are at an age that is crucial to their development.

Darien Representative Town Meeting, Rachel Taylor, Representative submitted testimony in support of this legislation sharing that she was a coach in Darien, and when parents entrust their children to programs, they assume – rightfully – that their safety, dignity, and well-being are the adults' highest priority, as that trust is sacred. She stated that her community has been shaken and disgusted by recent allegations of a Darien High School staff member being inappropriate with a student. Rachel pointed out that student safety depends on transparency in hiring and accountability in oversight. She expressed that this legislation addresses a critical gap by requiring that pending investigations or open cases involving allegations of abuse, neglect, or sexual misconduct be disclosed to prospective employers. Rachel expressed that school districts cannot make informed hiring decisions without complete information and when material facts are withheld, children are placed at risk. She said that this legislation does not focus on the presumption of guilt, but rather about responsible disclosure and ensures that districts are aware of active investigations so they can exercise appropriate judgment before placing an adult in a position of authority. She emphasized that the safety of children must always come first, as there is no population more deserving of peace, security, and protection. She noted that a society that fails its children, fails its future.

The following submitted testimony in support of this legislation emphasizing that the safety of children must always come first. They noted that school districts deserve transparency when making hiring decisions, and families deserve confidence that student safety is the highest priority. They stated that community has experienced the consequences of gaps in disclosure laws and understands the importance of protecting due process and student safety. They noted that when serious allegations are under investigation, future employers should have access to that information so that no preventable harm occurs. They included personal stories which emphasize the importance of this legislation:

Meghana Bhat

Darien RTC, Michael Bloomer, Member

John Boulton

Michael Cantwell

Dawn Crouch

Julie Gorski  
Peter Greca  
Darien Board of Finance, Paul B. Hendrickson, Member  
Renee Hoffmeister  
Ann-Gail Hult  
Adrienne Kelly  
Jackie Lenich  
Charlotte Little  
William McDaniel, Parent  
Christa McNamara  
Jessica Murphy  
Brian O'Hagan  
Rodrigo Ortigao  
Mark Raskopf  
Darien RTC, Jameson Riley, Chairman  
Michael Sgroe  
John Sini  
Alicja Skinner  
Pavan Wadhwa

Anonymous Darien High School Parent submitted testimony in support of this legislation sharing they are deeply concerned that an individual facing serious allegations was allowed to continue direct access with minors. They shared that this came to light because of the courage of a student and a guidance counselor who chose to believe her, but other girls in other districts have also spoken up and their accusations were dismissed. They point out that pattern is troubling and highlights systemic failures that extend beyond a single school. The emphasized students are often hesitant to report adults in positions of authority, but when they do find the courage to come forward, their concerns must be taken seriously and addressed transparently.

The following submitted general support for the bill:

Mercedes Blye, Mother  
AHEC, Cecil Tengtenga, Associate Director

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

The following submitted general opposition to the bill:

Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Anonymous

**GENERAL COMMENTS:**

CEA, Kate Dias, President  
SEEK, John Flanders, President submitted testimony sharing that the requirements of this legislation should also extend to school resource officers and school security officers.

**Reported by: Tyler Fisher**

**Date: 03/31/2026**