



General Assembly

February Session, 2026

**Substitute Bill No. 424**



**AN ACT CONCERNING OVERSIGHT OF PLANS PURSUANT TO SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 AND SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS IN THE STATE.**

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

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) For the fiscal year ending June  
2 30, 2027, and each fiscal year thereafter, the State Department of  
3 Education shall annually compile and make publicly available on its  
4 Internet web site data organized by school district showing the number  
5 of students in a public school, grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive,  
6 with a plan pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as  
7 amended from time to time. The department shall track trends in such  
8 data. All local and regional boards of education shall provide any  
9 information necessary for the department to compile such data. The  
10 department shall disaggregate and post such information in a manner  
11 that complies with the requirements of the Family Educational Rights  
12 and Privacy Act, 20 USC 1232g, as amended from time to time.

13 Sec. 2. (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) The Commissioner of Education shall,  
14 within available appropriations, convene a working group to review  
15 how local and regional boards of education are providing  
16 accommodations to students under plans pursuant to Section 504 of the  
17 Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended from time to time, including the  
18 use of staff and the amount of staff time dedicated to the development  
19 and implementation of such plans. The working group shall include, but

20 need not be limited to, representatives from the Connecticut Education  
21 Association, Connecticut School Counselor Association, American  
22 Federation of Teachers-Connecticut, Connecticut Association of Boards  
23 of Education, Connecticut Association of Public School  
24 Superintendents, Connecticut Chapter of the National Association of  
25 Social Workers and Connecticut Association of School Psychologists.

26 (b) Not later than January 1, 2027, the Commissioner of Education  
27 shall submit a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a  
28 of the general statutes, to the joint standing committees of the General  
29 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education and  
30 government oversight. Such report shall include, but need not be  
31 limited to, any best practices for plans pursuant to Section 504 of the  
32 Rehabilitation Act of 1973, recommendations for statutory changes, if  
33 applicable, and a summary and analysis of the impact of such plans and  
34 their usage since 2020.

35 Sec. 3. Section 10-15o of the 2026 supplement to the general statutes  
36 is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective*  
37 *October 1, 2026*):

38 (a) There is established an Office of the Educational Ombudsperson,  
39 which shall be within the Office of Governmental Accountability for  
40 administrative purposes only. The Office of the Educational  
41 Ombudsperson shall serve students and families of students in the  
42 pursuit of preschool, elementary and secondary education, special  
43 education, vocational education and adult education. The Office of the  
44 Educational Ombudsperson shall be under the direction of an  
45 Educational Ombudsperson who shall be appointed by the Governor  
46 and be selected from among individuals with expertise and experience  
47 in educational advocacy, special education and educational law.

48 (b) The Office of the Educational Ombudsperson shall:

49 (1) Receive, review and attempt to resolve any complaints from  
50 students and students' families, including, but not limited to, attempts  
51 to resolve such complaints in collaboration with schools and educators;

52 (2) Compile and analyze data on students and young people, through  
53 available data systems, including, but not limited to, the Connecticut  
54 Preschool through Twenty and Workforce Information Network,  
55 established pursuant to section 10a-57g;

56 (3) Assist employees of local and regional boards of education  
57 involved in planning and placement team meetings;

58 (4) Provide information to the public, agencies, legislators and others  
59 regarding the issues and concerns of students and make  
60 recommendations for resolving such issues and concerns;

61 (5) Analyze and monitor the development and implementation of  
62 federal, state and local laws, regulations and policies relating to students  
63 and recommend any changes the Educational Ombudsperson deems  
64 necessary;

65 (6) Disseminate information concerning the availability of the Office  
66 of the Educational Ombudsperson to assist students and families of  
67 students, as well as local and regional boards of education with  
68 educational resource concerns;

69 (7) On and after July 1, 2027, prioritize the office's efforts on those  
70 school districts that have been identified in the study conducted  
71 pursuant to section 10-76000 as disproportionately or over-identifying  
72 minority students for special education and related services; [and]

73 (8) Employ legal staff and legal counsel as necessary to perform the  
74 duties and responsibilities under subdivision (1) of this subsection;

75 (9) Hold hearings, subpoena witnesses and compel their attendance,  
76 administer oaths, take the testimony of any person under oath and  
77 require the production for examination of any books and papers relating  
78 to any matter under investigation or in question;

79 (10) Require written answers to interrogatories under oath relating to  
80 any complaint under investigation pursuant to this chapter alleging any  
81 discriminatory practice, as described in subdivision (6) of subsection (b)

82 of section 46a-64, as amended by this act, and adopt regulations, in  
83 accordance with the provisions of chapter 54, for the procedure for the  
84 issuance of interrogatories and compliance with interrogatory requests;

85 (11) Utilize such voluntary and uncompensated services of private  
86 individuals, agencies and organizations as may from time to time be  
87 offered and needed and with the cooperation of such agencies to carry  
88 out the provisions of this section; and

89 ~~[(8)]~~ (12) Take any other actions necessary to fulfill the duties of the  
90 Office of the Educational Ombudsperson and the Educational  
91 Ombudsperson as set forth in this subsection.

92 (c) On or before January 1, ~~[2026]~~ 2027, and annually thereafter, the  
93 Educational Ombudsperson shall submit a report, in accordance with  
94 the provisions of section 11-4a, to the Office of Governmental  
95 Accountability and the joint standing committees of the General  
96 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education and  
97 children. The Educational Ombudsperson shall report on: (1) The  
98 implementation of this section; (2) the overall effectiveness of the  
99 Educational Ombudsperson position; ~~[and]~~ (3) the number of  
100 complaints received pursuant to subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of this  
101 section during the prior year, how many complaints were substantiated  
102 or unsubstantiated, whether any corrective action was taken and the  
103 average of time it took to process such complaints; and (4) additional  
104 steps that need to be taken for the Educational Ombudsperson to be  
105 more effective.

106 Sec. 4. Section 46a-64 of the 2026 supplement to the general statutes  
107 is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective*  
108 *October 1, 2026*):

109 (a) It shall be a discriminatory practice in violation of this section: (1)  
110 To deny any person within the jurisdiction of this state full and equal  
111 accommodations in any place of public accommodation, resort or  
112 amusement because of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, sex,  
113 gender identity or expression, marital status, age, lawful source of

114 income, intellectual disability, mental disability, physical disability,  
115 including, but not limited to, blindness or deafness, status as a veteran,  
116 status as a victim of domestic violence, status as a victim of sexual  
117 assault or status as a victim of trafficking in persons, of the applicant,  
118 subject only to the conditions and limitations established by law and  
119 applicable alike to all persons; (2) to discriminate, segregate or separate  
120 on account of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, gender  
121 identity or expression, marital status, age, lawful source of income,  
122 intellectual disability, mental disability, learning disability, physical  
123 disability, including, but not limited to, blindness or deafness, status as  
124 a veteran, status as a victim of domestic violence, status as a victim of  
125 sexual assault or status as a victim of trafficking in persons; (3) for a  
126 place of public accommodation, resort or amusement to restrict or limit  
127 the right of a mother to breast-feed her child; (4) for a place of public  
128 accommodation, resort or amusement to refuse entry to a person with a  
129 disability who is accompanied by a service animal; or (5) to deny any  
130 person with a disability or any person training an animal as a service  
131 animal to assist a person with a disability, accompanied by such service  
132 animal, full and equal access to any place of public accommodation,  
133 resort or amusement. Any person with a disability or any person  
134 training an animal as a service animal may keep such service animal at  
135 all times in such place of public accommodation, resort or amusement  
136 at no extra charge, provided such service animal is in the direct custody  
137 and control of such person. When it is not obvious what service an  
138 animal provides, staff of a place of public accommodation, resort or  
139 amusement may inquire of the owner or keeper whether such animal is  
140 a service animal required because of a disability and what work or task  
141 the animal has been trained to perform. Nothing in this subsection shall  
142 preclude a business owner's ability to recover for damage caused to a  
143 person or property by a service animal. For the purposes of this  
144 subsection, "disability" and "service animal" have the same meanings as  
145 provided in section 22-345 and "place of public accommodation, resort  
146 or amusement" has the same meaning as provided in section 46a-44.

147 (b) (1) The provisions of this section with respect to the prohibition of

148 sex discrimination shall not apply to (A) the rental of sleeping  
149 accommodations provided by associations and organizations which  
150 rent all such sleeping accommodations on a temporary or permanent  
151 basis for the exclusive use of persons of the same sex, or (B) separate  
152 bathrooms or locker rooms based on sex.

153 (2) The provisions of this section with respect to the prohibition of  
154 discrimination on the basis of age shall not apply to minors or to special  
155 discount or other public or private programs to assist persons sixty  
156 years of age and older.

157 (3) The provisions of this section with respect to the prohibition of  
158 discrimination on the basis of physical disability shall not require any  
159 person to modify his property in any way or provide a higher degree of  
160 care for a physically disabled person, including, but not limited to blind  
161 or deaf persons, than for a person not physically disabled.

162 (4) The provisions of this section with respect to the prohibition of  
163 discrimination on the basis of creed shall not apply to the practice of  
164 granting preference in admission of residents into a nursing home as  
165 defined in section 19a-490, if (A) the nursing home is owned, operated  
166 by or affiliated with a religious organization, exempt from taxation for  
167 federal income tax purposes, and (B) the class of persons granted  
168 preference in admission is consistent with the religious mission of the  
169 nursing home.

170 (5) The provisions of this section with respect to the prohibition of  
171 discrimination on the basis of lawful source of income shall not prohibit  
172 the denial of full and equal accommodations solely on the basis of  
173 insufficient income.

174 (6) The provisions of this section with respect to the prohibition of  
175 discrimination on the basis of intellectual disability, mental disability or  
176 physical disability that concern a student with an individualized  
177 education program or a plan pursuant to Section 504 of the  
178 Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended from time to time, and where the  
179 place of public accommodation is a public school, shall be enforced by

180 complaint made to the Office of the Educational Ombudsperson in lieu  
181 of the commission.

182 (c) Any person who violates any provision of this section shall be  
183 guilty of a class D misdemeanor.

184 Sec. 5. Subsection (a) of section 46a-82 of the 2026 supplement to the  
185 general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu  
186 thereof (*Effective October 1, 2026*):

187 (a) Any person claiming to be aggrieved by an alleged discriminatory  
188 practice, except for an alleged violation of section 4a-60g or 46a-68<sub>z</sub> [or]  
189 the provisions of sections 46a-68c to 46a-68f, inclusive, or section 46a-64,  
190 as amended by this act, that is described in subdivision (6) of subsection  
191 (b) of section 46a-64, as amended by this act, may, by himself or herself  
192 or by such person's attorney, file with the commission a complaint in  
193 writing under oath, except that a complaint that alleges a violation of  
194 section 46a-64c need not be notarized. The complaint shall state the  
195 name and address of the person alleged to have committed the  
196 discriminatory practice, provide a short and plain statement of the  
197 allegations upon which the claim is based and contain such other  
198 information as may be required by the commission. The commission  
199 whenever it has reason to believe that a person who is named as party  
200 to a discriminatory practice complaint has engaged or is engaged in  
201 conduct that constitutes a violation of part VI, of chapter 952, may refer  
202 such matter to the Office of the Chief State's Attorney and said office  
203 shall conduct a further investigation as deemed necessary. After the  
204 filing of a complaint, the commission shall provide the complainant  
205 with a notice that: (1) Acknowledges receipt of the complaint; and (2)  
206 advises of the time frames and choice of forums available under this  
207 chapter.

208 Sec. 6. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Commissioner of Education  
209 shall implement changes to the special education data system  
210 developed by the Department of Education to better adapt its use for  
211 plans pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as

212 amended from time to time, and the differing requirements of such  
213 plans compared to individualized education programs. Such changes  
214 shall ensure, at a minimum, that the reporting requirements for plans  
215 pursuant to Section 504 of said act be limited to: (1) Student  
216 demographic information, (2) the evaluation period, (3) identification of  
217 behavioral, social and emotional needs of students, (4) the type of  
218 accommodation provided, (5) requirements related to case management  
219 or social workers, (6) any additional testing performed, (7) the  
220 identification of accessibility technologies utilized, and (8) any other  
221 information required under sections 10-76a to 10-76h, inclusive, of the  
222 general statutes, to the extent permitted by the Family Educational  
223 Rights and Privacy Act, 20 USC 1232g, as amended from time to time.

224       Sec. 7. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) Not later than July 1, 2027, and  
225 annually thereafter, each local and regional board of education shall  
226 report to the Department of Education, for students of the school district  
227 who have plans pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of  
228 1973, as amended from time to time and for which the board is  
229 responsible for implementing such plan: (1) The number of students  
230 with such plan by grade level, (2) the types of supports given to  
231 students, and (3) the number of complaints made by parents of the  
232 students with such plans. The department shall disaggregate such  
233 information in a manner that complies with the requirements of the  
234 Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 USC 1232g, as amended  
235 from time to time.

236       Sec. 8. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) The Department of Education  
237 shall provide increased oversight and coordination with local and  
238 regional boards of education to support students with plans pursuant  
239 to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended from time  
240 to time.

241       Sec. 9. (*Effective from passage*) (a) Not later than January 1, 2027, the  
242 Department of Education shall perform a needs assessment of the  
243 number of social workers and school counselors required to attain an  
244 ideal student-to-counselor and social worker ratio, specified by



245 elementary, middle and high school student need, for students with  
246 individualized education programs and plans pursuant to Section 504  
247 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended from time to time.

248 (b) Not later than January 1, 2027, the Commissioner of Education  
249 shall submit a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a  
250 of the general statutes, to the joint standing committees of the General  
251 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education and  
252 government oversight. Such report shall include the results of the needs  
253 assessment and recommendations for the ideal student-to-counselor  
254 and social worker ratio, specified by elementary, middle and high  
255 school for students with such programs or plans.

256 Sec. 10. (*Effective from passage*) The Commissioner of Social Services  
257 shall identify any services that local and regional boards of education  
258 provide that could be eligible for Medicaid reimbursement to leverage  
259 federal funding for school or support services. Not later than December  
260 31, 2026, the commissioner shall submit a report, in accordance with the  
261 provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing  
262 committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters  
263 relating to human services, government oversight and appropriations  
264 and the budgets of state agencies. Such report shall include a detailed  
265 listing of any identified services that could be eligible for such  
266 reimbursement.

267 Sec. 11. (*Effective from passage*) Not later than December 31, 2026, the  
268 Chief Workforce Officer of the Office of Workforce Strategy shall  
269 develop and report a strategic assessment plan to increase the capacity  
270 of school social workers and school counselors in the state to the General  
271 Assembly, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the  
272 general statutes.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	July 1, 2026	New section
Sec. 2	July 1, 2026	New section

---

Sec. 3	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	10-15o
Sec. 4	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	46a-64
Sec. 5	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	46a-82(a)
Sec. 6	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 7	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 8	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 9	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 10	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 11	<i>from passage</i>	New section

**Statement of Legislative Commissioners:**

In Section 1, the first sentence was reworded for clarity, in Section 2, "establish" was changed to "convene" and " how local and regional boards of education are providing accommodations to students under" was added for clarity, in Sections 6, 8 and 9, references to the Bureau of Special Education were deleted for statutory consistency, in Sections 6 and 7 references to FERPA were added to avoid potential conflicts with federal law, and in Section 7 the first sentence was reworded for clarity.

**GOS**      *Joint Favorable Subst. -LCO*