



General Assembly

**Amendment**

February Session, 2026

LCO No. 5360



Offered by:

REP. PARIS, 145<sup>th</sup> Dist.  
REP. WELANDER, 114<sup>th</sup> Dist.  
REP. WALKER, 93<sup>rd</sup> Dist.

To: Subst. House Bill No. 5004

File No. 103

Cal. No. 97

**"AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD WELFARE ACCOUNTABILITY AND  
TRANSPARENCY."**

1 Strike everything after the enacting clause and substitute the  
2 following in lieu thereof:

3 "Section 1. Section 17a-114 of the 2026 supplement to the general  
4 statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof  
5 (*Effective October 1, 2026*):

6 (a) As used in this section, (1) "approval" or "approved" means that a  
7 person has been approved to adopt or provide foster care by a child-  
8 placing agency licensed pursuant to section 17a-149, (2) "licensed"  
9 means a person holds a license to provide foster care issued by the  
10 Department of Children and Families, (3) "fictive kin caregiver" means  
11 a person who is twenty-one years of age or older and who is unrelated  
12 to a child by birth, adoption or marriage but who has an emotionally  
13 significant relationship with such child or such child's family amounting

14 to a familial relationship, and (4) "emergency placement" means the  
15 placement of a child by the Department of Children and Families in the  
16 home of a relative or fictive kin caregiver as a result of the sudden  
17 unavailability of such child's primary caretaker.

18 (b) (1) No child in the custody of the Commissioner of Children and  
19 Families shall be placed in foster care with any person, unless (A) (i)  
20 such person is licensed for such purpose by the department or the  
21 Department of Developmental Services pursuant to the provisions of  
22 section 17a-227, (ii) such person's home is approved by a child-placing  
23 agency licensed by the commissioner pursuant to section 17a-149, or (iii)  
24 such person has received approval as provided in this section, and (B)  
25 on and after January 1, 2017, for a child twelve years of age or older,  
26 such child has received a foster family profile in accordance with the  
27 provisions of section 17a-114e. For the purposes of this section, any  
28 prospective adoptive parent shall be licensed by the department. Upon  
29 the denial of an initial license, the department shall disclose to the  
30 applicant, in writing, the reason for such denial. Any applicant denied  
31 an initial license by the department may appeal such denial to the  
32 commissioner, in a form and manner prescribed by the commissioner,  
33 not later than thirty days after such denial. Not later than sixty days after  
34 the making of such appeal, the commissioner shall grant such license or  
35 affirm such denial in writing. The commissioner shall adopt regulations,  
36 in accordance with the provisions of chapter 54, to establish the licensing  
37 procedures and standards.

38 (2) (A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B) of this subdivision,  
39 the commissioner shall require each applicant for licensure or approval  
40 pursuant to this section and any person eighteen years of age or older  
41 living in the household of such applicant to submit to state and national  
42 criminal history records checks prior to issuing a license or approval to  
43 such applicant to accept placement of a child for purposes of foster care  
44 or adoption. Such criminal history records checks shall be conducted in  
45 accordance with section 29-17a. The commissioner shall check the (i)  
46 state child abuse and neglect registry established pursuant to section

47 17a-101k for the name of such applicant and for the name of any person  
48 eighteen years of age or older living in the household of such applicant,  
49 and (ii) child abuse and neglect registry in any state in which such  
50 applicant or person resided in the preceding five years for the name of  
51 such applicant or person.

52 (B) If an applicant for licensure or approval or any person eighteen  
53 years of age or older living in the household of such applicant has  
54 submitted to the state and national criminal history records checks  
55 described in subsection (c) of this section within the previous twelve-  
56 month period, the commissioner shall not require such applicant or  
57 person to submit to the state and national criminal history records  
58 checks described in subparagraph (A) of this subdivision in connection  
59 with the issuance of a license or approval.

60 (3) The commissioner shall require each individual licensed or  
61 approved pursuant to this section and any person eighteen years of age  
62 or older living in the household of such individual to submit to state and  
63 national criminal history records checks prior to renewing a license or  
64 approval for any individual providing foster care or adopting. Such  
65 criminal history records checks shall be conducted in accordance with  
66 section 29-17a. Prior to such renewal, the commissioner shall check the  
67 (A) state child abuse and neglect registry established pursuant to section  
68 17a-101k for the name of such applicant and for the name of any person  
69 eighteen years of age or older living in the household of such applicant,  
70 and (B) child abuse and neglect registry in any state in which such  
71 applicant or person resided in the preceding five years for the name of  
72 such applicant or person.

73 (4) The commissioner shall comply with any request to check the  
74 child abuse and neglect registry established pursuant to section 17a-  
75 101k made by the child welfare agency of another state.

76 (c) (1) Notwithstanding the requirements of subsection (b) of this  
77 section, the commissioner [may] shall make an emergency placement of  
78 a child with a relative or fictive kin caregiver who has not been issued a

79 license or approval, [when] if such emergency placement is in the best  
80 interests of the child, provided a satisfactory home visit is conducted  
81 and a basic assessment of the family is completed. When the  
82 commissioner makes such an emergency placement, the commissioner  
83 shall (A) request a criminal justice agency to perform a federal name-  
84 based criminal history search of such relative or fictive kin caregiver and  
85 each person eighteen years of age or older residing in the home, and (B)  
86 check the state child abuse and neglect registry established pursuant to  
87 section 17a-101k for the name of such relative or fictive kin caregiver  
88 and each person eighteen years of age or older residing in the home. The  
89 results of such name-based search shall be provided to the  
90 commissioner.

91 (2) Not later than ten calendar days after a name-based search is  
92 performed pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection, the  
93 commissioner shall request the State Police Bureau of Identification to  
94 perform a state and national criminal history records checks of such  
95 relative or fictive kin caregiver and each person eighteen years of age or  
96 older residing in the home, in accordance with section 29-17a. Such  
97 criminal history records checks shall be deemed as required by this  
98 section for the purposes of section 29-17a and the commissioner may  
99 request that such criminal history records checks be performed in  
100 accordance with subsection (c) of said section. The results of such  
101 criminal history records checks shall be provided to the commissioner.  
102 If any person refuses to provide fingerprints or other positive  
103 identifying information for the purposes of such criminal history  
104 records checks when requested, the commissioner shall immediately  
105 remove the child from the home.

106 (3) If the commissioner denies an emergency placement with a  
107 relative or fictive kin caregiver or removes a child from such home based  
108 on the results of a federal name-based criminal history search performed  
109 pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection, the person whose name-  
110 based search was the basis for such denial or removal may contest such  
111 denial or removal by requesting that state and national criminal history

112 records checks be performed pursuant to subdivision (2) of this  
113 subsection. Upon the denial of an emergency placement with a relative  
114 or fictive kin caregiver or removal of a child from such relative or fictive  
115 kin caregiver's home, the commissioner shall document, in writing, the  
116 reason for such denial or removal. If a child is placed in the home of a  
117 person who is not a relative or fictive kin caregiver, the commissioner  
118 shall confirm, in writing, that such placement, rather than placement  
119 with a relative or fictive kin caregiver, serves the best interests of such  
120 child.

121 (4) Any such relative or fictive kin caregiver who accepts placement  
122 of a child shall be subject to licensure by the commissioner, pursuant to  
123 regulations adopted by the commissioner in accordance with the  
124 provisions of chapter 54, to implement the provisions of this section or  
125 approval by a child-placing agency licensed pursuant to section 17a-149.  
126 The commissioner may grant a waiver from such regulations, including  
127 any standard regarding separate bedrooms or room-sharing  
128 arrangements, for a child placed with a relative or fictive kin caregiver,  
129 on a case-by-case basis, if such placement is otherwise in the best  
130 interests of such child, provided no procedure or standard that is safety-  
131 related may be so waived. The commissioner shall document, in writing,  
132 the reason for granting any waiver from such regulations.

133 (d) Any individual who has been licensed or approved to adopt or  
134 provide foster care and any relative or fictive kin caregiver with whom  
135 a child has been placed pursuant to subsection (c) of this section shall  
136 apply a reasonable and prudent parent standard, as defined in  
137 subsection (a) of section 17a-114d, on behalf of the child.

138 Sec. 2. Subsection (b) of section 46b-129 of the 2026 supplement to the  
139 general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu  
140 thereof (*Effective October 1, 2026*):

141 (b) If it appears from the specific allegations of the petition and other  
142 verified affirmations of fact accompanying the petition and application,  
143 or subsequent thereto, that there is reasonable cause to believe that (1)

144 the child or youth is suffering from serious physical illness or serious  
145 physical injury or is in immediate physical danger from the child's or  
146 youth's surroundings, and (2) as a result of said conditions, the child's  
147 or youth's safety is endangered and immediate removal from such  
148 surroundings is necessary to ensure the child's or youth's safety, the  
149 court shall either (A) issue an order to the parents or other person  
150 having responsibility for the care of the child or youth to appear at such  
151 time as the court may designate to determine whether the court should  
152 vest the child's or youth's temporary care and custody in a person  
153 related to the child or youth by blood or marriage, a fictive kin caregiver,  
154 as defined in section 17a-114, as amended by this act, or [in] some other  
155 person or suitable agency pending disposition of the petition, or (B)  
156 issue an order ex parte vesting the child's or youth's temporary care and  
157 custody in a person related to the child or youth by blood or marriage,  
158 a fictive kin caregiver or [in] some other person or suitable agency. A  
159 preliminary hearing on any ex parte custody order or order to appear  
160 issued by the court shall be held not later than ten days after the issuance  
161 of such order. The service of such orders may be made by any officer  
162 authorized by law to serve process, or by any probation officer  
163 appointed in accordance with section 46b-123, investigator from the  
164 Department of Administrative Services, state or local police officer or  
165 indifferent person. Such orders shall include a conspicuous notice to the  
166 respondent written in clear and simple language containing at least the  
167 following information: (i) That the order contains allegations that  
168 conditions in the home have endangered the safety and welfare of the  
169 child or youth; (ii) that a hearing will be held on the date on the form;  
170 (iii) that the hearing is the opportunity to present the parents' position  
171 concerning the alleged facts; (iv) that an attorney will be appointed for  
172 parents who cannot afford an attorney; (v) that such parents may apply  
173 for a court-appointed attorney by going in person to the court address  
174 on the form and are advised to go as soon as possible in order for the  
175 attorney to prepare for the hearing; (vi) that such parents, or a person  
176 having responsibility for the care and custody of the child or youth, may  
177 request the Commissioner of Children and Families to investigate  
178 placing the child or youth with a person related to the child or youth by

179 blood or marriage or a fictive kin caregiver who might serve as a  
180 licensed foster parent or temporary custodian for such child or youth.  
181 The commissioner shall investigate any relative or [relatives] fictive kin  
182 caregiver proposed to serve as a licensed foster parent or temporary  
183 custodian for such child or youth prior to the preliminary hearing and  
184 provide a preliminary report to the court at such hearing as to such  
185 relative's or [relatives'] caregiver's suitability and any potential barriers  
186 to licensing such relative or [relatives] caregiver as a foster parent or  
187 parents or granting temporary custody of such child or youth to such  
188 [relative or relatives] caregiver; and (vii) that if such parents have any  
189 questions concerning the case or appointment of counsel, any such  
190 parent is advised to go to the court or call the clerk's office at the court  
191 as soon as possible. Upon application for appointed counsel, the court  
192 shall promptly determine eligibility and, if the respondent is eligible,  
193 promptly appoint counsel. The expense for any temporary care and  
194 custody shall be paid by the town in which such child or youth is at the  
195 time residing, and such town shall be reimbursed for such expense by  
196 the town found liable for the child's or youth's support, except that  
197 where a state agency has filed a petition pursuant to the provisions of  
198 subsection (a) of this section, the agency shall pay such expense. The  
199 agency shall give primary consideration to placing the child or youth  
200 with a relative or fictive kin caregiver. If such placement with a relative  
201 or fictive kin caregiver is denied, the agency shall give secondary  
202 consideration to placing the child or youth in the town where such child  
203 or youth resides. The agency shall file in writing with the clerk of the  
204 court the reasons for placing the child or youth in a particular placement  
205 with a person other than a relative or fictive kin caregiver or outside the  
206 town where the child or youth resides, as applicable. If such child or  
207 youth is placed with a person other than a relative or fictive kin  
208 caregiver, such writing shall include confirmation that the placement  
209 selected for such child or youth, rather than placement with a relative  
210 or fictive kin caregiver, serves the best interests of such child or youth.  
211 Upon issuance of an ex parte order, the court shall provide to the  
212 commissioner and the parent or guardian specific steps necessary for  
213 each to take to address the ex parte order for the parent or guardian to

214 retain or regain custody of the child or youth. Upon the issuance of such  
215 order, or not later than sixty days after the issuance of such order, the  
216 court shall make a determination whether the Department of Children  
217 and Families made reasonable efforts to keep the child or youth with his  
218 or her parents or guardian prior to the issuance of such order and, if  
219 such efforts were not made, whether such reasonable efforts were not  
220 possible, taking into consideration the child's or youth's best interests,  
221 including the child's or youth's health and safety. Any person or agency  
222 in which the temporary care and custody of a child or youth is vested  
223 under this section shall have the following rights and duties regarding  
224 the child or youth: (I) The obligation of care and control; (II) the  
225 authority to make decisions regarding emergency medical,  
226 psychological, psychiatric or surgical treatment; and (III) such other  
227 rights and duties that the court having jurisdiction may order.

228       Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) As used in this section,  
229 "caregiver" means a relative or fictive kin caregiver, as defined in section  
230 17a-114 of the general statutes, as amended by this act, who has accepted  
231 emergency placement of a child pursuant to subsection (c) of section  
232 17a-114 of the general statutes, as amended by this act.

233       (b) There is established a grant program to provide grant payments  
234 to caregivers for clothing, food, safety-related purchases and other  
235 necessities for children upon the placement of such children with such  
236 caregivers by the Commissioner of Children and Families.

237       (c) Not later than January 1, 2027, the Commissioner of Children and  
238 Families shall develop a formula for the distribution of such grant  
239 payments, which formula shall include a maximum grant payment of  
240 six hundred twenty-five dollars to any caregiver, and guidelines for the  
241 appropriate expenditure of grant payments.

242       (d) Each caregiver who receives a grant payment under this section  
243 shall file an expenditure report with the Commissioner of Children and  
244 Families at such time and in such manner as the commissioner  
245 prescribes. Each such caregiver shall refund to the department any

246 amounts not expended in accordance with the guidelines developed by  
247 the commissioner pursuant to subsection (c) of this section.

248 (e) Not later than January 1, 2028, and annually thereafter, the  
249 Commissioner of Children and Families shall submit a report to the  
250 Child Welfare Policy and Oversight Committee, established pursuant to  
251 section 18 of this act, and, in accordance with the provisions of section  
252 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee of the  
253 General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children.  
254 Such report shall include, for the preceding year, (1) the number of grant  
255 payments provided, (2) the amount of each such grant payment, and (3)  
256 the length of each such placement that has concluded.

257 Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) As used in this section, (1)  
258 "after school program" means a program that takes place after regular  
259 school hours and provides educational, enrichment and recreational  
260 activities for children in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, (2)  
261 "caregiver" means a relative or fictive kin caregiver, as defined in section  
262 17a-114 of the general statutes, as amended by this act, who has accepted  
263 emergency placement of a child pursuant to subsection (c) of section  
264 17a-114 of the general statutes, as amended by this act, or a caregiver as  
265 defined in section 17a-126 of the general statutes, and (3) "child care  
266 service" has the same meaning as provided in section 19a-131k of the  
267 general statutes.

268 (b) There is established a grant program to provide grant payments  
269 to caregivers for all or a portion of costs associated with after school  
270 programs and child care services for children placed in the care of such  
271 caregivers by the Commissioner of Children and Families.

272 (c) Not later than January 1, 2027, the Commissioner of Children and  
273 Families shall develop (1) an application process, (2) eligibility criteria  
274 for caregivers, (3) guidelines for the appropriate expenditure of grant  
275 payments by caregivers, and (4) a formula for the distribution of such  
276 grant payments, which formula shall include the maximum grant  
277 payment available to any caregiver, provided not more than fifty per

278 cent of the total funds available in any fiscal year for such grant program  
279 shall be provided for costs associated with after school programs and  
280 not more than fifty per cent of such funds shall be provided for costs  
281 associated with child care services. Priority for such grant payments  
282 shall be given to caregivers who are eligible for foster care maintenance  
283 payments or a guardianship subsidy but have not yet received an initial  
284 payment or subsidy.

285 (d) Each caregiver who receives a grant payment under this section  
286 shall file an expenditure report with the Commissioner of Children and  
287 Families at such time and in such manner as the commissioner  
288 prescribes. Each such caregiver shall refund to the department any  
289 amounts not expended in accordance with the guidelines developed by  
290 the commissioner pursuant to subsection (c) of this section.

291 (e) Not later than January 1, 2028, and annually thereafter, the  
292 Commissioner of Children and Families shall submit a report to the  
293 Child Welfare Policy and Oversight Committee, established pursuant to  
294 section 18 of this act, and, in accordance with the provisions of section  
295 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee of the  
296 General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children.  
297 Such report shall include, for the preceding year, the (1) number of  
298 applications received by the department for grant payments for costs  
299 associated with (A) after school programs, and (B) child care services,  
300 and (2) total number of grant payments and the amount of each such  
301 grant payment provided for (A) after school programs, and (B) child  
302 care services.

303 Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) As used in this section,  
304 "relevant field" means social work, applied sociology, child  
305 development, child welfare, clinical psychology, counseling, human  
306 development and family studies, human services, marriage and family  
307 therapy, nursing, social services, education and criminal justice.

308 (b) Not later than January 1, 2027, the Department of Children and  
309 Families, in consultation with institutions of higher education in the

310 state, shall establish a prospective social worker internship program that  
311 includes opportunities for internship experiences, job shadowing,  
312 support and coaching, and offers participants insight into the  
313 professional challenges and rewards associated with social work over  
314 the course of not less than one academic semester. The department shall  
315 (1) establish (A) an application process and criteria for acceptance in  
316 such program, which criteria shall include, but need not be limited to, a  
317 requirement that participants are enrolled in a bachelor's or master's  
318 degree program in a relevant field, and (B) criteria for the selection of  
319 mentors who are employed by the department as social workers, and (2)  
320 recruit such employees to participate as mentors in the program.

321 (c) Not later than January 1, 2027, the Department of Children and  
322 Families shall establish a first-year social worker mentorship program  
323 for newly hired social workers employed by the department. Such  
324 program shall include opportunities for job shadowing, support and  
325 coaching during each participant's first year of employment as a social  
326 worker by the department. The department shall establish (1) an  
327 application process and criteria for acceptance in such program, and (2)  
328 criteria for the selection of experienced social workers employed by the  
329 department to serve as mentors, and recruit such employees to  
330 participate as mentors in the program.

331 (d) The Department of Children and Families (1) shall pay a stipend  
332 to each intern and mentor who successfully completes the internship or  
333 mentorship program described in subsections (b) and (c) of this section,  
334 and (2) may pay a stipend to each newly hired social worker who  
335 successfully completes the mentorship program described in subsection  
336 (c) of this section.

337 (e) Not later than January 1, 2028, and annually thereafter, the  
338 Commissioner of Children and Families shall submit a report to the  
339 Child Welfare Policy and Oversight Committee, established pursuant to  
340 section 18 of this act, and, in accordance with the provisions of section  
341 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee of the  
342 General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children.

343 Such report shall include, for the preceding year, the (1) number of  
344 participants in the internship and mentorship programs described in  
345 subsections (b) and (c) of this section, (2) the cost of each such program,  
346 (3) whether or not adequate resources have been allocated to each such  
347 program, and (4) recruitment and retention statistics amongst  
348 participants.

349 Sec. 6. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) Not later than January 1, 2028,  
350 the Commissioner of Children and Families, in consultation with the  
351 Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services, shall develop  
352 and provide a mandatory educational training program for employees  
353 of the Department of Children and Families concerning (1) perinatal  
354 mood and anxiety disorders, and (2) trauma-informed, nonstigmatizing  
355 practices for interacting with individuals suffering from such disorders.  
356 Such training program shall (A) include guidance to such employees  
357 concerning such disorders and practices, and (B) be offered not less than  
358 once every six months thereafter. Each person employed by the  
359 department shall complete such training program at least once.  
360 Employees hired prior to January 1, 2028, shall complete such training  
361 program not later than December 31, 2028. Employees hired on or after  
362 January 1, 2028, shall complete such training not later than one year after  
363 beginning such employment.

364 Sec. 7. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) Not later than January 1, 2028,  
365 the Commissioner of Children and Families shall, in consultation with  
366 the Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection and the  
367 executive director of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors,  
368 Equity and Opportunity, established pursuant to section 2-127 of the  
369 general statutes, develop and provide a mandatory educational training  
370 program for employees of the Department of Children and Families  
371 concerning human trafficking and trauma-informed, nonstigmatizing  
372 practices for interacting with child and adult victims of human  
373 trafficking. Such training program shall (1) include guidance to such  
374 employees concerning such practices, and (2) be offered not less than  
375 once every six months thereafter. Each person employed by the

376 department shall complete such training program at least once.  
377 Employees hired prior to January 1, 2028, shall complete such training  
378 program not later than December 31, 2028. Employees hired on or after  
379 January 1, 2028, shall complete such training not later than one year after  
380 beginning such employment.

381       Sec. 8. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) Not later than January 1, 2028,  
382 the Commissioner of Children and Families shall develop and provide  
383 a mandatory educational training program for employees of the  
384 Department of Children and Families concerning cultural sensitivity in  
385 the delivery of the department's services and implicit bias, as defined in  
386 section 19a-490u of the general statutes. Such training shall (1) include  
387 guidance to such employees concerning such issues, and (2) be offered  
388 not less than once every six months thereafter. Each person employed  
389 by the department shall complete such training program not less than  
390 once every two years. Employees hired prior to January 1, 2028, shall  
391 initially complete such training program not later than December 31,  
392 2028. Employees hired on or after January 1, 2028, shall initially  
393 complete such training not later than one year after beginning such  
394 employment.

395       Sec. 9. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) As used in this section,  
396 "postsecondary education" means any program that leads to an  
397 academic degree or certification in a vocation or trade.

398       (b) Not later than January 1, 2027, the Department of Children and  
399 Families shall establish a postsecondary education grant program for  
400 the purpose of providing grant payments to fund the postsecondary  
401 education of youths (1) adopted through the department's foster care  
402 program on or after January 1, 2005, and prior to turning eighteen years  
403 of age, and (2) committed to the department who consent to remain in  
404 the care of the Commissioner of Children and Families upon reaching  
405 eighteen years of age pursuant to section 46b-129 of the general statutes,  
406 as amended by this act. The department shall establish (A) an  
407 application process, (B) a list of postsecondary education programs  
408 approved by the department, (C) a formula for the distribution of such

409 grant payments, and (D) eligibility criteria for such youths. No such  
410 youth shall participate in the program after such youth reaches twenty-  
411 one years of age, except that the commissioner may permit any youth  
412 that enrolled in the program prior to turning twenty-one years of age to  
413 continue to participate until such youth turns twenty-four years of age  
414 or completes such youth's postsecondary education program,  
415 whichever occurs earlier. The department shall require any youth  
416 participating in the program to complete for each year such youth is  
417 enrolled in postsecondary education, as a condition to such  
418 participation, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and  
419 applications for any appropriate scholarships and grants, including, but  
420 not limited to, through any scholarship application portal administered  
421 by the provider of such postsecondary education.

422 (c) Not later than July 1, 2027, the Commissioner of Children and  
423 Families shall submit a report, in accordance with the provisions of  
424 section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee of  
425 the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children.  
426 Such report shall include a description of the status of the postsecondary  
427 education grant program established pursuant to this section, including,  
428 but not limited to, (1) the number of applications to such program  
429 received by the Department of Children and Families to date, (2) the  
430 number of applicants accepted to participate in the program to date, and  
431 (3) any challenges the department encountered in implementing the  
432 program.

433 (d) Not later than January 1, 2028, the Commissioner of Children and  
434 Families shall submit a report, in accordance with the provisions of  
435 section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committees of  
436 the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children,  
437 higher education, appropriations and government oversight, and the  
438 Auditors of Public Accounts. Such report shall include, but need not be  
439 limited to, information concerning (1) the number of applicants to such  
440 program and any similar program offered by the Department of  
441 Children and Families, in each year any such program was offered, (2)

442 the number of applicants that received a grant payment under such  
443 program or any such similar program, in each year any such program  
444 was offered, (3) the total amount of grant payments provided pursuant  
445 to such program and any such similar program, in each year any such  
446 program was offered, and the amount of each individual grant in each  
447 such year, (4) the average amount of each grant payment provided  
448 pursuant to such program and any such similar program, per student  
449 annually and per student over the duration of such students'  
450 participation in any such program, (5) the specific postsecondary  
451 education programs attended by participants in such program during  
452 the prior year, including the names of the institutions offering such  
453 programs and the degrees toward which participants are working, (6)  
454 the percentage of participants who have completed a postsecondary  
455 education program while participating in such program and any such  
456 similar program, (7) the number of participants who have requested to  
457 remain in such program or any such similar program after reaching  
458 twenty-one years of age, and the number of participants who have been  
459 approved by the department to do so, (8) the reasons the department  
460 has provided applicants to such program, and any such similar  
461 program, for denying such applicants from participating in such  
462 programs, (9) the reasons the department has provided participants in  
463 such program, and any such similar program, for denying such  
464 participants' requests to remain in such programs after reaching twenty-  
465 one years of age, (10) the length of time any such similar program has  
466 existed pursuant to department policy, and (11) demographic data  
467 pertaining to participants in such program and any such similar  
468 program.

469       Sec. 10. (*Effective October 1, 2026*) Not later than July 1, 2028, the  
470 Auditors of Public Accounts shall conduct a performance audit of the  
471 postsecondary education grant program established pursuant to section  
472 9 of this act. Said auditors shall conduct such performance audit in  
473 accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards or  
474 by another method said auditors deem appropriate. Said auditors shall  
475 submit a report, in accordance with section 11-4a of the general statutes,

476 to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having  
477 cognizance of matters relating to children, higher education,  
478 appropriations and government oversight. Such report shall include,  
479 but need not be limited to, (1) such audit; (2) information concerning (A)  
480 the number of applicants to such program and any similar program  
481 offered by the Department of Children and Families, in each year any  
482 such program was offered, (B) the number of applicants that received a  
483 grant payment under such program or any such similar program, in  
484 each year any such program was offered, (C) the total amount of grant  
485 payments provided pursuant to such program and any such similar  
486 program, in each year any such program was offered, and the amount  
487 of each individual grant in each such year, (D) the average amount of  
488 each grant payment provided pursuant to such program and any such  
489 similar program, per student annually and per student over the  
490 duration of such students' participation in any such program, (E) the  
491 specific postsecondary education programs attended by participants in  
492 such program during the prior year, including the names of the  
493 institutions offering such programs and the degrees toward which  
494 participants are working, (F) the percentage of participants who have  
495 completed a postsecondary education program while participating in  
496 such program and any such similar program, (G) the number of  
497 participants who have requested to remain in such program or any such  
498 similar program after reaching twenty-one years of age, and the number  
499 of participants who have been approved by the department to do so, (H)  
500 the reasons the department has provided applicants to such program,  
501 and any such similar program, for denying such applicants from  
502 participating in such programs, (I) the reasons the department has  
503 provided participants in such program, and any such similar program,  
504 for denying such participants' requests to remain in such programs after  
505 reaching twenty-one years of age, (J) the length of time any such similar  
506 program has existed pursuant to department policy, and (K)  
507 demographic data pertaining to participants in such program and any  
508 such similar program; and (3) any recommendations for improving the  
509 administrative efficiency or effectiveness of such program.

510 Sec. 11. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) Not later than January 1, 2027,  
511 the Department of Children and Families shall establish an Internet web  
512 site, which may be within the department's Internet web site, that  
513 includes the following:

514 (1) A public, online dashboard to provide real-time information  
515 concerning the department's administration of and performance with  
516 respect to the state-wide program of services described in section 17a-3  
517 of the general statutes. Such information shall include, but need not be  
518 limited to, the information identified by the working group established  
519 pursuant to section 12 of this act and each annual report submitted  
520 pursuant to sections 3, 4 and 5 of this act. Such dashboard shall (A) be  
521 integrated with any electronic data collection and tracking tools utilized  
522 by the department to ensure that such information is consistently and  
523 continually updated, and (B) present such information in a manner that  
524 permits users to access and understand such information without  
525 specialized knowledge or training.

526 (2) Information for the public concerning offices, programs and  
527 services administered and offered by the department, including, but not  
528 limited to, the Office of Community Relations, housing and  
529 homelessness programs, the Careline established pursuant to section  
530 17a-103a of the general statutes and text message programs.

531 (3) Information concerning the identification of child abuse and  
532 neglect and how to report child abuse and neglect to the department.

533 (4) The educational training program developed pursuant to section  
534 17a-101 of the general statutes, in a video format that members of the  
535 public may access without creating a username or password for use on  
536 such Internet web site, and any accompanying training materials.

537 Sec. 12. (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a working  
538 group to identify information to be included on the online dashboard  
539 established pursuant to section 11 of this act concerning the Department  
540 of Children and Families' administration of and performance with

541 respect to the state-wide program of services described in section 17a-3  
542 of the general statutes.

543 (b) The working group shall consist of the following members: (1)  
544 Members of the General Assembly, as designated by the chairpersons of  
545 the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having  
546 cognizance of matters relating to children; (2) the ranking members of  
547 the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having  
548 cognizance of matters relating to children, or their designees; (3) the  
549 Commissioner of Children and Families, or the commissioner's  
550 designee; and (4) any individuals such chairpersons deem relevant and  
551 necessary to carry out the duties of the working group.

552 (c) The administrative staff of the joint standing committee of the  
553 General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children  
554 shall serve as administrative staff of the working group.

555 (d) Not later than October 1, 2026, the working group shall submit a  
556 report on its findings, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a  
557 of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee of the General  
558 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children. The  
559 working group shall terminate on the date that it submits such report or  
560 October 1, 2026, whichever is later.

561 Sec. 13. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) The parent or guardian  
562 of a child who (1) is the subject of an investigation conducted pursuant  
563 to section 17a-101g of the general statutes, as amended by this act, (2) is  
564 under protective supervision, as defined in section 17a-93 of the general  
565 statutes, (3) is receiving protective services, as defined in section 17a-93  
566 of the general statutes, or (4) resides with a child described in  
567 subdivisions (1) to (3), inclusive, of this subsection, shall notify the  
568 Commissioner of Children and Families, in a form and manner  
569 prescribed by the commissioner, if such child will be removed from the  
570 state for a period exceeding fourteen consecutive days. Such notification  
571 shall be provided not less than forty-eight hours prior to any such  
572 removal, and include the (A) address of each location at which such

573 child will sleep during such removal, and (B) duration of such removal.  
574 If the duration of any such removal is extended, such parent or guardian  
575 shall notify the commissioner, in a form and manner prescribed by the  
576 commissioner, as soon as is practicable.

577 (b) Upon the (1) removal from the state by the parent or guardian of  
578 a child described in subsection (a) of this section for a period exceeding  
579 fourteen consecutive days, where notification has not been provided  
580 pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, or (2) extension of the duration  
581 of any removal by a parent or guardian where notification has not been  
582 provided pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, the Commissioner  
583 of Children and Families shall (A) attempt to contact a parent, guardian  
584 or other family member of such child on three consecutive days  
585 following such removal or extension, to ascertain such child's location,  
586 if unknown, and evaluate such child's safety, except that the  
587 commissioner may discontinue efforts to contact such parent, guardian  
588 or other family member if contact is made during such three-day period,  
589 and (B) if such child's location is known, (i) contact the child welfare or  
590 law enforcement agency for the jurisdiction in which such child is  
591 located and request that such agency conduct an in-person visit to such  
592 child's location for the purpose of evaluating such child's safety, (ii)  
593 follow up with such child welfare or law enforcement agency on three  
594 consecutive days following such request to determine whether such  
595 visit was conducted and discuss any findings, except that the  
596 commissioner may discontinue efforts to follow up with such agency if  
597 the commissioner determines such visit was conducted during such  
598 three-day period, and (iii) conduct an in-person visit to evaluate such  
599 child's safety or, if such in-person visit is not feasible, attempt to conduct  
600 a visit by means of a video conferencing platform for the purpose of  
601 evaluating such child's safety. The commissioner shall document in  
602 writing all attempts to contact and communicate with any child, parent,  
603 guardian, family member, child welfare agency or law enforcement  
604 agency pursuant to this subsection.

605 (c) The provisions of subsection (b) of this section shall not apply

606 where the Commissioner of Children and Families is not notified of the  
607 removal of a child described in subsection (a) of this section until after  
608 such child's return to the state.

609 (d) The Commissioner of Children and Families shall provide written  
610 notice of the provisions of this section to the parents or guardians of  
611 each child described in subsection (a) of this section.

612 (e) The Commissioner of Children and Families may (1) undertake  
613 the actions described in subsection (b) of this section with respect to any  
614 child described in subsection (a) of this section who has been removed  
615 from the state for a period of fourteen or fewer consecutive days, or (2)  
616 require the parent or guardian of any such child to notify the  
617 commissioner if such child will be removed from the state for a period  
618 of fourteen or fewer consecutive days.

619 Sec. 14. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) Evidence that the parent or  
620 guardian of a child has voluntarily sought treatment from or is being  
621 voluntarily treated by a mental health professional for mental health  
622 concerns, including, but not limited to, a perinatal mood or anxiety  
623 disorder, shall not form the sole basis for any action or proceeding by  
624 the Department of Children and Families, provided nothing in this  
625 section shall preclude any action or proceeding by such department  
626 based on harm or risk of harm to a child or the use of information  
627 concerning such treatment in any action or proceeding where  
628 authorized.

629 Sec. 15. Subsection (b) of section 17a-101g of the general statutes is  
630 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October*  
631 *1, 2026*):

632 (b) The Commissioner of Children and Families shall establish  
633 protocols for the investigation of and response to reports of child abuse  
634 or neglect of children from birth to three years of age. Such protocols  
635 shall include, but need not be limited to, (1) appropriate supervision of  
636 the case, (2) appropriate visitation by department personnel to such

637 children, (3) documentation of case activities relevant to the safety and  
638 well-being of such children, and (4) a case supervision tool specific to  
639 the unique needs and risk status of children from birth to three years of  
640 age. All investigations of a report of child abuse or neglect pursuant to  
641 this section shall include a home visit at which the child and any siblings  
642 are observed, if appropriate, a determination of the nature, extent and  
643 cause or causes of the reported abuse or neglect, a determination of the  
644 person or persons suspected to be responsible for such abuse or neglect,  
645 the name, age and condition of other children residing in the same  
646 household and an evaluation of the parents and the home. During any  
647 such observation, department personnel shall consider any opinions  
648 expressed by the child or other children residing in the household  
649 concerning whether such child was abused or neglected. The report of  
650 such investigation shall be in writing. The investigation shall also  
651 include, but not be limited to, a review of criminal conviction  
652 information concerning the person or persons alleged to be responsible  
653 for such abuse or neglect and previous allegations of abuse or neglect  
654 relating to the child or other children residing in the household or  
655 relating to family violence. After an investigation into a report of abuse  
656 or neglect has been completed, the commissioner shall determine, based  
657 upon a standard of reasonable cause, whether a child has been abused  
658 or neglected, as defined in section 46b-120. If the commissioner  
659 determines that abuse or neglect has occurred, the commissioner shall  
660 also determine whether: (A) There is an identifiable person responsible  
661 for such abuse or neglect; and (B) such identifiable person poses a risk  
662 to the health, safety or well-being of children and should be  
663 recommended by the commissioner for placement on the child abuse  
664 and neglect registry established pursuant to section 17a-101k. If the  
665 commissioner has made the determinations in subparagraphs (A) and  
666 (B) of this subsection, the commissioner shall issue notice of a  
667 recommended finding to the person suspected to be responsible for such  
668 abuse or neglect in accordance with section 17a-101k. If the child is  
669 represented by an attorney or guardian ad litem, the commissioner shall  
670 notify the child's attorney or guardian ad litem in writing not less than  
671 five days prior to the date of any meeting in which the department is

672 considering removing the child from the household, except, if the  
673 commissioner, or the commissioner's designee, has authorized the  
674 immediate removal of a child from his or her household pursuant to the  
675 provisions of subsection (e) of this section, the commissioner, or the  
676 commissioner's designee, shall not be required to provide advance  
677 written notice of such removal to the child's attorney or guardian ad  
678 litem.

679 Sec. 16. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) As used in this section,  
680 "personal emergency communication device" means a global  
681 positioning system-enabled, wearable device that allows an individual  
682 to contact local police by pressing a button or through another  
683 mechanism.

684 (b) On and after January 1, 2027, the Commissioner of Children and  
685 Families shall (1) provide personal emergency communication devices  
686 to employees of the Department of Children and Families who regularly  
687 conduct visits to or evaluations of the homes of children under the  
688 supervision of the commissioner and desire access to such devices  
689 during such visits or evaluations, and (2) develop guidelines and a  
690 training program for the use of such devices.

691 Sec. 17. (*Effective July 1, 2026*) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027,  
692 the Department of Children and Families shall establish an urgent crisis  
693 center, as defined in section 38a-477aa of the general statutes, in the city  
694 of Stamford.

695 Sec. 18. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) There is established a  
696 Child Welfare Policy and Oversight Committee. The committee shall  
697 evaluate and make recommendations concerning (1) the operation,  
698 policies and service outcomes of state agencies providing services  
699 relating to and supporting child welfare in the state, and (2) the efficacy  
700 and continued operation of existing state-wide boards, committees and  
701 councils charged with oversight and evaluation of child welfare  
702 services.

703 (b) The committee shall consist of the following members:

704 (1) Two members appointed by the speaker of the House of  
705 Representatives, one of whom shall be a mental health professional  
706 employed at an urgent crisis center, as defined in section 19a-179f of the  
707 general statutes;

708 (2) Two members appointed by the president pro tempore of the  
709 Senate, one of whom shall be a regional social worker supervisor  
710 employed by the Department of Children and Families;

711 (3) Two members appointed by the majority leader of the House of  
712 Representatives, one of whom shall be a private provider of child  
713 welfare services;

714 (4) Two members appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, one  
715 of whom shall be a foster parent licensed pursuant to section 17a-114 of  
716 the general statutes, as amended by this act;

717 (5) Two members appointed by the minority leader of the House of  
718 Representatives, one of whom shall be an expert in child welfare  
719 employed by an institution of higher education in the state;

720 (6) Two members appointed by the minority leader of the Senate, one  
721 of whom shall be a relative or fictive kin caregiver, as defined in section  
722 17a-114 of the general statutes, as amended by this act, with whom a  
723 child in the care and custody of the Commissioner of Children and  
724 Families has been placed;

725 (7) The chairpersons and ranking members of the joint standing  
726 committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters  
727 relating to children;

728 (8) The chairpersons and ranking members of the joint standing  
729 committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters  
730 relating to appropriations;

731 (9) The Commissioner of Children and Families, or the

- 732 commissioner's designee;
- 733 (10) The Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee;
- 734 (11) The Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services, or  
735 the commissioner's designee;
- 736 (12) The Commissioner of Developmental Services, or the  
737 commissioner's designee;
- 738 (13) The Commissioner of Social Services, or the commissioner's  
739 designee;
- 740 (14) The Commissioner of Housing, or the commissioner's designee;
- 741 (15) The Commissioner of Correction, or the commissioner's  
742 designee;
- 743 (16) The Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, or the  
744 secretary's designee;
- 745 (17) The Chief Court Administrator, or the Chief Court  
746 Administrator's designee;
- 747 (18) The Probate Court Administrator, or the Probate Court  
748 Administrator's designee;
- 749 (19) The Chief Public Defender, or the Chief Public Defender's  
750 designee; and
- 751 (20) The Child Advocate, or the Child Advocate's designee.
- 752 (c) Any vacancy shall be filled by the appointing authority. Members  
753 of the committee shall serve without compensation.
- 754 (d) The chairpersons of the joint standing committee of the General  
755 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children, or the  
756 chairperson's designees, and the Secretary of the Office of Policy and  
757 Management, or the secretary's designee, shall serve as cochairpersons

758 of the committee. Such cochairpersons shall schedule the first meeting  
759 of the committee, which shall be held not later than sixty days after the  
760 effective date of this section. The committee shall meet quarterly, and  
761 more often upon the call of the cochairpersons. The cochairpersons may  
762 designate subcommittees to carry out the functions of the committee.

763 (e) The committee shall complete its duties under this section in  
764 consultation with one or more organizations that focus on relevant  
765 issues regarding child welfare, including an independent institution of  
766 higher education in the state. The committee may accept administrative  
767 support and technical and research assistance from any such  
768 organization.

769 (f) Not later than January 1, 2028, and annually thereafter until such  
770 time as the committee is terminated pursuant to subsection (g) of this  
771 section, the committee shall submit a report, in accordance with the  
772 provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing  
773 committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters  
774 relating to children, concerning its evaluation and recommendations.

775 (g) On or after January 1, 2031, the committee may, upon making a  
776 determination that its work is no longer necessary or beneficial to the  
777 provision of services relating to and supporting child welfare in the  
778 state, by majority vote of the committee, terminate.

779 Sec. 19. (*Effective from passage*) The Departments of Children and  
780 Families and Emergency Services and Public Protection shall conduct a  
781 joint study to identify ways to improve (1) communication between said  
782 departments with respect to the provision of child welfare services, and  
783 (2) existing policies and practices relating to the removal of children  
784 from such children's homes pursuant to sections 17a-101g, of the general  
785 statutes, as amended by this act, and 46b-129 of the general statutes, as  
786 amended by this act. Not later than January 1, 2027, the Departments of  
787 Children and Families Emergency Services and Public Protection shall  
788 jointly submit a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-  
789 4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee of the General

790 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children. Such report  
791 shall include the departments' findings and recommendations for  
792 improvements.

793 Sec. 20. (*Effective from passage*) The Department of Children and  
794 Families and the Office of the Child Advocate shall conduct a joint study  
795 to identify ways to improve department policies and practices to ensure  
796 the immediate removal from an out-of-home placement made by the  
797 Commissioner of Children and Families of any child who becomes a  
798 victim of physical or sexual assault occurring in or as a result of such  
799 out-of-home placement. Not later than January 1, 2027, the Department  
800 of Children and Families and the Office of the Child Advocate shall  
801 jointly submit a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-  
802 4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee of the General  
803 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children. Such report  
804 shall include the department's and office's findings and  
805 recommendations for improvements.

806 Sec. 21. Section 46b-486 of the general statutes is repealed and the  
807 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2026*):

808 The Department of Public Health may release information relating to  
809 an acknowledgment of parentage to (1) a signatory of the  
810 acknowledgment, (2) the child if such child is eighteen years of age or  
811 older, (3) a guardian of the person whose parentage is acknowledged,  
812 (4) an attorney representing a person to whom such information may be  
813 released, (5) a court, (6) a federal agency, (7) an authorized  
814 representative of the Department of Social Services, (8) an authorized  
815 representative of the Department of Children and Families, (9) the child  
816 support agency of this state, (10) any agency acting under a cooperative  
817 or purchase of service agreement with the child support agency of this  
818 state, and (11) the child support agency of another state.

819 Sec. 22. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) Notwithstanding the  
820 provisions of subsection (a) of section 17a-101g of the general statutes,  
821 following the third accepted report of child abuse or neglect pursuant

822 to sections 17a-101a to 17a-101c, inclusive, of the general statutes, or  
 823 section 17a-103 of the general statutes, in which (1) the child who is the  
 824 subject of the report, (2) a sibling, half-sibling, step-sibling or other child  
 825 residing in the same home as such child, or (3) any combination of  
 826 children described in subdivisions (1) and (2) of this section, has been  
 827 identified as the subject of prior accepted reports during the previous  
 828 twelve-month period, the commissioner shall commence an  
 829 investigation as described in section 17a-101g of the general statutes, as  
 830 amended by this act. Such investigation shall not be conducted by any  
 831 employee of the Department of Children and Families who conducted  
 832 an investigation into an allegation of child abuse or neglect concerning  
 833 any child described in subdivisions (1) and (2) of this section during the  
 834 previous twelve-month period. Nothing in this section shall (A)  
 835 preclude the commissioner from authorizing the removal of any child  
 836 from such child's surroundings pursuant to subsection (e) of section 17a-  
 837 101g of the general statutes, or (B) be construed to require the  
 838 department to assign a different employee to investigate any report of  
 839 child abuse or neglect concerning any such child made subsequent to  
 840 the completion of any investigation required pursuant to this section."

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	17a-114
Sec. 2	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	46b-129(b)
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 4	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 5	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 6	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 7	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 8	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 9	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 10	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 11	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 12	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 13	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 14	<i>from passage</i>	New section

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Sec. 15	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	17a-101g(b)
Sec. 16	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 17	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 18	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 19	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 20	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 21	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	46b-486
Sec. 22	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section