PA 26-139—sHB 5323
Education Committee
Appropriations Committee

AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES

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Makes various revisions to the laws on disclosing misconduct-related information during the hiring process of a prospective school employee, including requiring disclosure of allegations currently under investigation

SUMMARY: This act makes various changes to the education statutes. A section-by-section analysis follows.
EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026, unless otherwise noted below.

§ 1 — ARMED SECURITY GUARDS

Allows retired parole officers to provide armed security services in public schools; prohibits police and parole officers who left employment due to certain disciplinary actions from providing armed security services in schools

Prior law limited who a municipality or school board could hire or contract with for armed school security services in a public school to (1) sworn members of local police departments and (2) qualified retired police officers who left in good standing. The act (1) allows former parole officers to also provide these services and (2) defines "good standing."

Parole Officers

By law, to serve as an armed school security officer, a retired police officer must be a "qualified retired law enforcement officer" under the federal Law Enforcement Officers Safety Act (LEOSA). (LEOSA permits qualified officers, both active and retired, to carry a concealed firearm across state lines if they meet the statutory requirements.) Under the act, parole officers must meet this requirement, as it applies to parole officers, to qualify to provide armed school security services.

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

officers.

Good Standing

By law, to be hired as armed school security, former officers must have retired or separated from service in good standing. The act specifies that this means the officer's employment with a state, local, or tribal law enforcement unit or the Department of Correction did not end due to disciplinary action, while under investigation, or while a disciplinary action was pending. It further specifies that retired police officers cannot provide security services if they are prohibited from being hired as a police officer due to being dismissed for malfeasance or other serious misconduct or resigning while under investigation.

§ 2 — SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

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

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

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

§ 3 — ACADEMIC STANDARDS FOR INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS

Prohibits schools from requiring students in grades 9-12 who participate in interscholastic athletics to meet academic eligibility standards that are higher than those set by CIAC

Starting July 1, 2027, the act prohibits school boards from requiring students in grades 9 to 12 who participate in interscholastic athletics to meet or exceed academic eligibility standards that are higher than those set by the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC).

In practice, CIAC's current standards generally require students to have earned a passing grade in at least four quarter credits at the end of the most recent marking period or, for fall sports, at least four credits toward graduation during the prior school year or marking period.

§ 4 — THERAPEUTIC ARTS PROGRAM GRANTS

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

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

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

§ 5 — TEMPORARY PLACEMENT OF BRIDGEPORT MILITARY ACADEMY STUDENTS

Allows the SDE commissioner to authorize the temporary placement of students enrolled in the Bridgeport Military Academy in available classroom space at the Fairchild Wheeler Interdistrict Magnet Campus while a permanent facility for the Bridgeport Military Academy is constructed

The act allows the SDE commissioner to authorize the temporary placement (for two years or less) of students enrolled in the Bridgeport Military Academy in available classroom space at the Fairchild Wheeler Interdistrict Magnet Campus during construction of a permanent facility for the Bridgeport Military Academy. Under the act, this authorization is limited to the academy's grades and programs approved by SDE and does not alter Fairchild Wheeler Interdistrict Magnet Campus's magnet school status or magnet grant funding eligibility.

The act requires SDE to:

1. assign a separate facility code to the academy during the temporary placement and continue maintaining separate enrollment, performance, and accountability metrics for both schools; and
2. establish guidelines to ensure that the temporary placement does not cause the students of the two schools to commingle in core academic courses or programs, unless approved by SDE for purposes consistent with each school's educational program.

Once the permanent facility is done, the Bridgeport Military Academy must leave the temporary location and resume operations in the new facility.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 6 — REPEAL OF EDUCATOR PREPARATION REGULATIONS

Delays the effective date of the repeal of various educator preparation regulations from July 1, 2026, to July 1, 2027

PA 24-41, § 51, repeals numerous State Board of Education (SBE) educator preparation program and certification regulations. The act delays the effective date by one year, to July 1, 2027.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 7 — BROAD ASSESSMENT REDUCTION INCENTIVE PROGRAM

Establishes an incentive program for school districts that limits broad assessments, integrates formative assessment tools, and increases teacher competency in the assessment process

The act requires SDE to establish an incentive program for school districts that (1) reduces or limits the time students spend taking broad assessments, (2) integrates state-provided interim and formative assessment tools into the curriculum to support instructional improvement, and (3) increases teacher competency in the formative assessment process. The program may also include public recognition, financial awards, and increased operational flexibility for school districts. Under the act, a "broad assessment" measures what students should have learned during a semester or school year, but it does not include the state-wide mastery examinations or any federally required student assessments. SDE must establish the program by July 1, 2027, within available appropriations.

§ 8 — GUIDANCE ON REDUCING DISCRETIONARY LOCAL STUDENT ASSESSMENTS

Requires SDE to develop and give guidance to school boards on reducing discretionary local student assessments

By June 1, 2027, the act requires SDE to develop and give guidance to school boards on reducing discretionary local student assessments. The guidance may include eliminating fall and spring broad assessments (as defined in § 7, above) or substituting certain end-of-unit classroom summative assessments with state-provided interim and formative assessment tools.

§ 9 — SDE REQUEST TO AMEND STATE PLAN UNDER ESSA

Allows SDE to submit a request to the DoEd to amend the state's approved ESSA plan

The act allows SDE to submit a request to the U.S. Department of Education (DoEd) to amend the state's approved plan submitted for the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (P.L. 114-95). Under federal law and ESSA, Connecticut must submit a plan to DoEd addressing standards, assessments, school and district accountability, and special help for struggling schools. This request may include a federal accountability requirements waiver that allows DoEd to modify the state's high school accountability model by (1) reducing the weight assigned to the academic achievement indicator and (2) increasing the weight for other relevant indicators, such as college and career-oriented measures. The accountability model uses these indicators to calculate the accountability index score for individual districts and schools.

Under the act, SDE can only submit a request after consulting with a working group established through existing law. The working group, which is jointly

convened by the Connecticut Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut presidents, or their designees, reviews (1) high school grading policies used by school boards and (2) the accountability index and data SDE uses to calculate index scores.
EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 10 — MATHEMATICS PATHWAYS, INSTRUCTION, AND SPECIALIST GUIDANCE

Requires SDE to (1) redesign the state's high school mathematics pathways, (2) develop a list of professional development providers for high quality mathematics instruction, (3) explore the feasibility of launching MathCon, and (4) develop mathematics specialist guidelines

The act requires SDE, by January 1, 2027, to redesign the state's high school mathematics pathways to prepare students for relevant postsecondary careers. These pathways must include (1) science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; (2) data science and statistics; (3) quantitative reasoning; and (4) workforce and applied mathematics.

The act also requires SDE to (1) develop a list of professional development providers to help implement high-quality mathematics instruction and (2) explore the feasibility of launching MathCon, a professional learning series for educators and national math competition for students. SDE may consult with relevant stakeholders to implement these requirements.

Additionally, SDE, in consultation with the Connecticut Educator Preparation and Certification Board (CEPCB), must develop guidelines for mathematics specialists in supporting mathematics interventions. Under existing law, CEPCB is responsible for modernizing and aligning educator preparation and certification to ensure that policies attract and retain effective and diverse professionals to work in Connecticut's public schools.
EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§§ 11-13 — MISCONDUCT-RELATED INFORMATION DISCLOSURE DURING PROSPECTIVE SCHOOL EMPLOYEE HIRING PROCESS

Makes various revisions to the laws on disclosing misconduct-related information during the hiring process of a prospective school employee, including requiring disclosure of allegations currently under investigation

Applicant Misconduct and Employment History Disclosure

Existing law requires school boards, charter school governing councils, magnet school operators, and supervisory agents of nonpublic schools ("school-governing entities") to review an applicant's employment history before offering employment if the applicant will have direct student contact in the position. Through this process, the school-governing entities must, among other things, (1) review a written statement by the applicant; (2) contact the applicant's former employers (presumably, these include only those that the applicant discloses) and gather

information from them on SDE-developed forms; and (3) review information from SDE on the department's knowledge of the applicant's engagement in certain misconduct. The act generally expands the scope of what former employers and SDE must disclose to include allegations currently under investigation (whether or not related to the applicant's employment).

Applicant's Written Statement and SDE-Developed Forms for Previous Employers

Under prior law, as part of the applicant's written statement and the forms filled out by the applicant's current and prior employers, all had to state if they knew the applicant:

1. had an allegation made against them of abuse, neglect, or sexual misconduct under investigation by any employer, state agency, or municipal police department that was not found to be unsubstantiated, and an employer also must reveal any pending investigation;
2. resigned, was asked to resign, otherwise separated from employment, or was disciplined for a substantiated allegation of these acts or while an allegation was pending or under investigation; or
3. surrendered a professional or occupational license or other credential, or had it suspended or revoked, for a substantiated allegation of these acts or while one was pending or under investigation.

The act expands the scope of this inquiry by additionally asking the:

1. applicant and previous employers if the applicant is currently under investigation for abuse, neglect, or sexual misconduct and
2. applicant if he or she was, or is currently, facing an allegation involving the injury or risk of injury to, or impairing the morals of, a minor and whether any of the actions described above (resignation, separation, discipline, or surrendering a credential) happened in relation to an allegation or investigation involving the injury or risk of injury to, or impairing the morals of, a minor.

The act also removes a provision in prior law that explicitly exempted disclosing investigations that resulted in a finding that all allegations were unsubstantiated. So, under the act, the applicant must disclose the investigations regardless of whether the allegations were substantiated. The act also makes conforming changes to specify that certain provisions apply to all employer, state agency, and local police investigations.

Providing Information to SDE

By law, school governing entities must notify SDE when an applicant or employee has been disciplined because of a finding of abuse, neglect, or sexual misconduct. The act additionally requires them to notify SDE about applicants who are currently under investigation for this conduct.

SDE-Provided Information

By law, school-governing entities must ask SDE for the following information: (1) an applicant's employment eligibility status for positions requiring a state certification or permit; (2) whether SDE knows of a substantiated finding of abuse, neglect, or sexual misconduct against the applicant; and (3) whether SDE has been notified about a criminal conviction or pending criminal charge against the applicant. The act expands the information that SDE must release to school governing entities to also include if it knows of any pending investigation of abuse, neglect, or sexual misconduct.

Applicants Who Are Contractors

By law, a contractor's employee who will have direct student contact must make the same disclosures as an applicant for employment with a school-governing entity. The act expands the requirements for information disclosure and sharing for these employees in the same way as for job applicants described above. Additionally, for any of its current employees who will have contact with children, a contractor must (1) contact any of that employee's current or former employers that were school-governing entities or caused the employee to have contact with children and (2) ask them for any information about whether there was a finding of abuse, neglect, or sexual misconduct against the employee. The act expands this to include information about any pending or open investigation. Under existing law and the act, the contractor must report all of this information to the school-governing entity.

Additionally, under existing law, a school-governing entity must, upon request, give any other school-governing entity or the SDE commissioner information it has about a finding of abuse, neglect, or sexual misconduct on someone being considered for a job as a direct employee of another education employer or a contractor. The act similarly expands this provision to apply to investigations.

Contract and Agreement Restrictions

By law, a school-governing entity cannot enter into a collective bargaining agreement, employment contract, resignation or termination agreement, severance agreement, or any other contract or agreement, or take any action with certain effects. Under prior law, these agreements and actions could not require a school-governing entity to expunge information about an allegation or finding of abuse, neglect, or sexual misconduct from any documents it maintained unless, after an investigation, the allegation was dismissed or found false. The act raises the standard for expungement by eliminating dismissed allegations, allowing expungement only when an allegation is found to be false.

By law, these agreements also cannot affect a school-governing entity's ability to report suspected abuse, neglect, or sexual misconduct to the appropriate authorities.

School Operators Requesting Applicant Misconduct Information From SBE

By law, eligible and nongovernmental school operators (see *Background — Eligible and Nongovernmental School Operators*) may ask SBE for information about (1) the applicant's employment eligibility for a certified position; (2) whether SDE knows of prior applicant discipline for a finding of abuse, neglect, or sexual misconduct; or (3) whether SDE has been notified about criminal charges pending, or criminal convictions against, an applicant, and information about the charges. The act allows eligible and nongovernmental school operators to also ask SBE for information about whether a former employer has notified SDE that the applicant is under investigation for abuse; neglect; or sexual misconduct, unless the investigation resulted in a finding that all allegations were false.

Background — Eligible and Nongovernmental School Operators

By law, "eligible school operators" are schools or school districts authorized to receive national criminal history record information from the FBI under federal law. These operators include (1) local or regional boards of education, (2) the Technical Education and Career System (the technical high school system), and (3) interdistrict magnet school operators that are not third-party nonprofit corporations approved by the SDE commissioner.

By law, nongovernmental school operators are:

1. third-party, nonprofit interdistrict magnet school operators approved by the SDE commissioner;
2. state or local charter school governing councils;
3. SBE-approved (a) endowed or incorporated academies and (b) special education facilities;
4. private school supervisory agents; or
5. private providers of special education services.