



Senate Bill No. 2

Public Act No. 23-101

AN ACT CONCERNING THE MENTAL, PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLNESS OF CHILDREN.

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

Section 1. (*Effective July 1, 2023*) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, the Department of Public Health shall hire, on or before January 1, 2024, a full-time employee to assist in the licensure of social workers pursuant to chapter 383b of the general statutes.

Sec. 2. Section 11-24b of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

(a) [Each] Except as otherwise provided in subsection (i) of this section, each principal public library, as defined in section 11-24a, shall be eligible to receive a state grant in accordance with the provisions of subsections (b), (c) and (d) of this section provided the following requirements are met:

(1) An annual statistical report which includes certification that the grant, when received, shall be used for library purposes is filed with the State Library Board in such manner as the board may require. The report shall include information concerning local library governance, hours of service, type of facilities, library policies, resources, programs and services available, measurement of levels of services provided,

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personnel and fiscal information concerning library receipts and expenditures;

(2) Documents certifying the legal establishment of the principal public library in accordance with the provisions of section 11-20 are filed with the board;

(3) The library is a participating library in the Connecticutcard program established pursuant to section 11-31b;

(4) Except for the fiscal years ending June 30, 2010, to June 30, 2015, inclusive, the principal public library shall not have had the amount of its annual tax levy or appropriation reduced to an amount which is less than the average amount levied or appropriated for the library for the three fiscal years immediately preceding the year of the grant, except that if the expenditures of the library in any one year in such three-year period are unusually high as compared with expenditures in the other two years, the library may request an exception to this requirement and the board, upon review of the expenditures for that year, may grant an exception;

(5) State grant funds shall be expended within two years of the date of receipt of such funds. If the funds are not expended in that period, the library shall submit a plan to the State Librarian for the expenditure of any unspent balance;

(6) Principal public libraries shall not charge individuals residing in the town in which the library is located or the town in which the contract library is located for borrowing and lending library materials, accessing information, advice and assistance and programs and services which promote literacy; and

(7) Principal public libraries shall provide equal access to library service for all individuals and shall not discriminate upon the basis of age, race, sex, gender identity or expression, religion, national origin,

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handicap or place of residency in the town in which the library is located or the town in which the contract library is located.

(b) Within the limits of amounts appropriated, the amount each principal public library shall be eligible to receive annually as a state grant shall be determined by the State Library Board as follows:

(1) Principal public libraries, as defined in section 11-24a, shall receive a base grant of one thousand two hundred dollars for each fiscal year.

(2) Of the amount appropriated for purposes of this section less the amount distributed as base grants, sixty per cent shall be set aside and paid to principal public libraries pursuant to subsection (c) of this section.

(3) Of the amount appropriated for purposes of this section less the amount distributed as base grants, forty per cent shall be set aside and paid to principal public libraries pursuant to subsection (d) of this section.

(c) The principal public library for each town shall be eligible to receive an equalization grant in an amount determined as follows:

(1) The adjusted equalized net grand list per capita, as defined in subsection (a) of section 10-261, for all towns in the state shall be ranked from highest to lowest.

(2) The adjusted equalized net grand list per capita, as ranked for all towns in the state from highest to lowest shall be divided into the following four classes: Class A, towns ranked from one to forty-two, inclusive; class B, towns ranked from forty-three to eighty-four, inclusive; class C, towns ranked from eighty-five to one hundred twenty-six, inclusive; and, class D, towns ranked from one hundred twenty-seven to one hundred sixty-nine, inclusive. Funds available for purposes of this subsection pursuant to subdivision (2) of subsection (b)

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of this section shall be distributed among the four classes so that principal public libraries for class B, C, and D towns, respectively, shall receive two times, three times and four times as much on a per capita basis as principal public libraries for class A towns.

(3) Grants to the principal public library for each town shall be determined as follows: Said funds available for purposes of this subsection shall be multiplied by the per cent of funds for each class to determine an appropriation per class; the appropriation per class shall be divided by the total population per class to determine an amount per capita; the grant for the principal public library for each town shall be the town's total population multiplied by the amount per capita. For purposes of this subdivision, "total population" of a town means that enumerated in the most recent federal decennial census of population.

(d) The principal public library for each town shall be eligible to receive an incentive grant in an amount to be determined as follows:

(1) The State Library Board shall, in such manner as prescribed by the board, determine for each fiscal year, a state-wide average for per capita library expenditures and each town's individual per capita library expenditure based on the annual statistical report filed in accordance with subsection (a) of this section.

(2) The per capita library expenditure of each town shall be ranked from highest to lowest and the ranked expenditures shall be divided into the following classes: Class A, towns which meet or exceed the state-wide average for per capita library expenditures; class B, towns which meet seventy-five to ninety-nine per cent, inclusive, of the state-wide average; class C, towns which meet fifty to seventy-four per cent, inclusive, of the state-wide average; and, class D, towns which fall below fifty per cent of the state-wide average. Funds available for purposes of this subsection pursuant to subdivision (3) of subsection (b) of this section shall be distributed among the four classes so that principal

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public libraries for class A and B towns, respectively, shall receive three times and two times as much on a per capita basis as principal public libraries for class C towns.

(3) Grants to the principal public library for each town shall be determined as follows: Said funds available for purposes of this subsection shall be multiplied by the per cent of funds per class to determine an appropriation per class; the appropriation per class shall be divided by the total population per class to determine an amount per capita; the grant for the principal public library for each town shall be the town's total population multiplied by the amount per capita. For purposes of this subdivision, "total population" of a town means that enumerated in the most recent federal decennial census of population.

(e) Application for grants under this section shall be made to the State Library Board in such form and at such time as the board designates. The grant may be used for general library purposes and no portion of the grant money shall revert to the general fund of the town or towns normally served by such library.

(f) The Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management shall make available, upon the request of the State Library Board, such information as is needed by the board to determine grant payments in accordance with the provisions of subsections (c) and (d) of this section.

(g) The State Library Board shall report triennially to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education on the impact of the state grants distributed pursuant to this section.

(h) The State Library Board shall, in accordance with the provisions of chapter 54, adopt regulations to implement the provisions of this section.

(i) No principal public library shall be eligible to receive a state grant

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in accordance with the provisions of subsections (b), (c) and (d) of this section if such principal public library does not maintain and adhere to collection development, collection management and collection reconsideration policies that have been approved by the governing body of such library. Such collection reconsideration policy shall offer residents a clear process to request a reconsideration of library materials. In the instance of a book challenge, these policies shall govern.

Sec. 3. Subsection (h) of section 17a-248g of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

(h) For the fiscal [years] year ending June 30, 2023, and [June 30, 2024] each fiscal year thereafter, the commissioner shall make a general administrative payment to providers in the amount of two hundred dollars for each child with an individualized family service plan on the first day of the billing month and whose plan accounts for less than nine hours of service during such billing month, provided at least one service is provided by such provider during such billing month.

Sec. 4. Section 17a-248 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

As used in this section, [and] sections 17a-248b to 17a-248g, inclusive, as amended by this act, 38a-490a and 38a-516a and section 6 of this act, unless the context otherwise requires:

(1) "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Early Childhood.

(2) "Council" means the State Interagency Birth-to-Three Coordinating Council established pursuant to section 17a-248b.

(3) "Early intervention services" means early intervention services, as defined in 34 CFR Part 303.13, as from time to time amended.

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(4) "Eligible children" means children (A) (i) from birth to thirty-six months of age, who are not eligible for special education and related services pursuant to sections 10-76a to 10-76h, inclusive, and (ii) thirty-six months of age or older, who are receiving early intervention services and are eligible or being evaluated for participation in preschool services pursuant to Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 USC 1411 et seq., until such children are enrolled in such preschool services, and (B) who need early intervention services because such children are:

[(I)] (i) Experiencing a significant developmental delay as measured by standardized diagnostic instruments and procedures, including informed clinical opinion, in one or more of the following areas: Cognitive development; physical development, including vision or hearing; communication development; social or emotional development; or adaptive skills; or

[(II)] (ii) Diagnosed as having a physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay.

(5) "Evaluation" means a multidisciplinary professional, objective assessment conducted by appropriately qualified personnel in order to determine a child's eligibility for early intervention services.

(6) "Individualized family service plan" means a written plan for providing early intervention services to an eligible child and the child's family.

(7) "Lead agency" means the Office of Early Childhood, the public agency responsible for the administration of the birth-to-three system in collaboration with the participating agencies.

(8) "Parent" means (A) a biological, adoptive or foster parent of a child; (B) a guardian, except for the Commissioner of Children and Families; (C) an individual acting in the place of a biological or adoptive

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parent, including, but not limited to, a grandparent, stepparent, or other relative with whom the child lives; (D) an individual who is legally responsible for the child's welfare; or (E) an individual appointed to be a surrogate parent.

(9) "Participating agencies" includes, but is not limited to, the Departments of Education, Social Services, Public Health, Children and Families and Developmental Services, the Office of Early Childhood, the Insurance Department and the Department of Aging and Disability Services.

(10) "Qualified personnel" means persons who meet the standards specified in 34 CFR Part 303.31, as from time to time amended, and who are licensed physicians or psychologists or persons holding a state-approved or recognized license, certificate or registration in one or more of the following fields: (A) Special education, including teaching of the blind and the deaf; (B) speech and language pathology and audiology; (C) occupational therapy; (D) physical therapy; (E) social work; (F) nursing; (G) dietary or nutritional counseling; and (H) other fields designated by the commissioner that meet requirements that apply to the area in which the person is providing early intervention services, provided there is no conflict with existing professional licensing, certification and registration requirements.

(11) "Service coordinator" means a person carrying out service coordination services, as defined in 34 CFR Part 303.34, as from time to time amended.

(12) "Primary care provider" means physicians and advanced practice registered nurses, licensed by the Department of Public Health, who are responsible for performing or directly supervising the primary care services for children enrolled in the birth-to-three program.

Sec. 5. Subsection (b) of section 17a-248e of the general statutes is

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repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

(b) The individualized family service plan shall be in writing and contain: (1) A statement of the child's present level of physical development, cognitive development, language and speech development and self-help skills, based on acceptable objective criteria; (2) a statement of the family's priority, resources and concerns relating to enhancing the development of the eligible child; (3) a statement of the major outcomes expected to be achieved for the child and the family and the criteria, procedures and timelines used to determine the degree to which progress toward achieving the outcomes are being made, and whether modifications or revisions of the outcomes are necessary; (4) a statement of specific early intervention services necessary to meet the unique needs of the eligible child and the family, including the frequency, intensity and the method of delivering services; (5) a statement of the natural environments in which the services shall be provided; (6) the projected dates for initiation of services and the anticipated duration of such services; (7) the name of the approved comprehensive service provider that will provide or procure the services specified in the individualized family service plan; (8) the name of the individual service coordinator from the profession most immediately relevant to the eligible child's or the family's needs who will be responsible for the implementation of the plan and coordination with the other agencies and providers or an otherwise qualified provider selected by a parent; and (9) the steps to be taken to support the transition of the child who is eligible for participation in preschool programs under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Act, 20 USC 1471 et seq., as appropriate. The individualized family service plan shall be translated into and provided in Spanish for any family whose primary language is Spanish.

Sec. 6. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2023*) On and after July 1, 2023, an

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eligible child whose primary language is Spanish shall be entitled to receive early intervention services from Spanish-speaking qualified personnel and a Spanish-speaking service coordinator. If no such Spanish-speaking qualified personnel or Spanish-speaking coordinator are available within the state-wide birth-to-three system for the provision of such early intervention services, a Spanish-speaking interpreter or translator shall be used to provide interpreting or translation services to such Spanish-speaking eligible children on behalf of the qualified personnel and service coordinators providing early intervention services, and such Spanish-speaking interpreter or translator shall be reimbursed at the rate received by court-appointed interpreters and translators within the judicial branch.

Sec. 7. Section 31-57r of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2023*):

As used in this section and sections 31-57s to 31-57w, inclusive:

(1) "Child" means a biological, adopted or foster child, stepchild, legal ward of a service worker, or a child of a service worker standing in loco parentis, who is (A) under eighteen years of age; or (B) eighteen years of age or older and incapable of self-care because of a mental or physical disability;

(2) "Day or temporary worker" means an individual who performs work for another on (A) a per diem basis, or (B) an occasional or irregular basis for only the time required to complete such work, whether such individual is paid by the person for whom such work is performed or by an employment agency or temporary help service, as defined in section 31-129;

(3) "Employee" means an individual engaged in service to an employer in the business of the employer;

(4) "Employer" means any person, firm, business, educational

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institution, nonprofit agency, corporation, limited liability company or other entity that employs fifty or more individuals in the state, which shall be determined based on such person's, firm's, business', educational institution's, nonprofit agency's, corporation's, limited liability company's or other entity's payroll for the week containing October first, annually. "Employer" does not include: (A) Any business establishment classified in sector 31, 32 or 33 in the North American Industrial Classification System, or (B) any nationally chartered organization exempt from taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, or any subsequent corresponding internal revenue code of the United States, as from time to time amended, that provides all of the following services: Recreation, child care and education;

(5) "Family violence" has the same meaning as provided in section 46b-38a;

(6) "Mental health wellness day" means a day during which a service worker attends to such service worker's emotional and psychological well-being in lieu of attending a regularly scheduled shift;

[(6)] (7) "Retaliatory personnel action" means any termination, suspension, constructive discharge, demotion, unfavorable reassignment, refusal to promote, disciplinary action or other adverse employment action taken by an employer against an employee or a service worker;

[(7)] (8) "Service worker" means an employee primarily engaged in an occupation with one of the following broad or detailed occupation code numbers and titles, as defined by the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics Standard Occupational Classification system or any successor system: (A) 11-9050 Food Service Managers; (B) 11-9110 Medical and Health Services Managers; (C) 21-1020 Social Workers; (D) 21-1093 Social and Human Service Assistants; (E) 21-1094 Community Health

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Workers; (F) 21-1099 Community and Social Service Specialists, All Other; (G) 25-4020 Librarians; (H) 29-1050 Pharmacists; (I) 29-1070 Physician Assistants; (J) 29-1120 Therapists; (K) 29-1140 Registered Nurses; (L) 29-1150 Nurse Anesthetists; (M) 29-1160 Nurse Midwives; (N) 29-1170 Nurse Practitioners; (O) 29-2020 Dental Hygienists; (P) 29-2040 Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics; (Q) 29-2050 Health Practitioner Support Technologists and Technicians; (R) 29-2060 Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses; (S) 31-1011 Home Health Aides; (T) 31-1012 Nursing Aides, Orderlies and Attendants; (U) 31-1013 Psychiatric Aides; (V) 31-9091 Dental Assistants; (W) 31-9092 Medical Assistants; (X) 33-9032 Security Guards; (Y) 33-9091 Crossing Guards; (Z) 35-1010 Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers; (AA) 35-2010 Cooks; (BB) 35-2020 Food Preparation Workers; (CC) 35-3010 Bartenders; (DD) 35-3020 Fast Food and Counter Workers; (EE) 35-3030 Waiters and Waitresses; (FF) 35-3040 Food Servers, Nonrestaurant; (GG) 35-9010 Dining Room and Cafeteria Attendants and Bartender Helpers; (HH) 35-9020 Dishwashers; (II) 35-9030 Hosts and Hostesses, Restaurant, Lounge and Coffee Shop; (JJ) 35-9090 Miscellaneous Food Preparation and Serving Related Workers; (KK) 37-2011 Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners; (LL) 37-2019 Building Cleaning Workers, All Other; (MM) 39-3030 Ushers, Lobby Attendants and Ticket Takers; (NN) 39-5010 Barbers, Hairdressers, Hairstylists and Cosmetologists; (OO) 39-6010 Baggage Porters, Bellhops and Concierges; (PP) 39-9010 Child Care Workers; (QQ) 39-9021 Personal Care Aides; (RR) 41-1010 First-Line Supervisors of Sales Workers; (SS) 41-2011 Cashiers; (TT) 41-2021 Counter and Rental Clerks; (UU) 41-2030 Retail Salespersons; (VV) 43-3070 Tellers; (WW) 43-4080 Hotel, Motel and Resort Desk Clerks; (XX) 43-4170 Receptionists and Information Clerks; (YY) 43-5020 Couriers and Messengers; (ZZ) 43-6010 Secretaries and Administrative Assistants; (AAA) 43-9010 Computer Operators; (BBB) 43-9020 Data Entry and Information Processing Workers; (CCC) 43-9030 Desktop Publishers; (DDD) 43-9040 Insurance Claims and Policy Processing Clerks; (EEE)

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43-9050 Mail Clerks and Mail Machine Operators, Except Postal Service; (FFF) 43-9060 Office Clerks, General; (GGG) 43-9070 Office Machine Operators, Except Computer; (HHH) 43-9080 Proofreaders and Copy Markers; (III) 43-9110 Statistical Assistants; (JJJ) 43-9190 Miscellaneous Office and Administrative Support Workers; (KKK) 51-3010 Bakers; (LLL) 51-3020 Butchers and Other Meat, Poultry and Fish Processing Workers; (MMM) 51-3090 Miscellaneous Food Processing Workers; (NNN) 53-3010 Ambulance Drivers and Attendants, Except Emergency Medical Technicians; (OOO) 53-3020 Bus Drivers; (PPP) 53-3040 Taxi Drivers and Chauffeurs; or (QQQ) 29-2034 Radiologic Technologists, and is (i) paid on an hourly basis, or (ii) not exempt from the minimum wage and overtime compensation requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 and the regulations promulgated thereunder, as amended from time to time. "Service worker" does not include day or temporary workers;

[(8)] (9) "Sexual assault" means any act that constitutes a violation of section 53a-70b of the general statutes, revision of 1958, revised to January 1, 2019, or section 53a-70, 53a-70a, 53a-71, 53a-72a, 53a-72b or 53a-73a;

[(9)] (10) "Spouse" means a husband or wife, as the case may be; and

[(10)] (11) "Year" means any three-hundred-sixty-five-day period used by an employer to calculate employee benefits.

Sec. 8. Subsection (a) of section 31-57t of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2023*):

(a) An employer shall permit a service worker to use the paid sick leave accrued pursuant to section 31-57s:

(1) For (A) a service worker's illness, injury or health condition, (B) the medical diagnosis, care or treatment of a service worker's mental

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illness or physical illness, injury or health condition, [or] (C) preventative medical care for a service worker, or (D) a mental health wellness day;

(2) For (A) a service worker's child's or spouse's illness, injury or health condition, (B) the medical diagnosis, care or treatment of a service worker's child's or spouse's mental or physical illness, injury or health condition, or (C) preventative medical care for a child or spouse of a service worker; and

(3) Where a service worker is (A) a victim of family violence or sexual assault, [(A)] or (B) the parent or guardian of a child who is a victim of family violence or sexual assault, provided such service worker is not the perpetrator or alleged perpetrator of such family violence or sexual assault, for (i) medical care or psychological or other counseling for physical or psychological injury or disability, [(B) to obtain] (ii) obtaining services from a victim services organization, [(C) to relocate] (iii) relocating due to such family violence or sexual assault, or [(D) to participate] (iv) participating in any civil or criminal proceedings related to or resulting from such family violence or sexual assault.

Sec. 9. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2023*) (a) The Commissioner of Social Services shall provide Medicaid reimbursement, to the extent permissible under federal law, for suicide risk assessments and other mental health evaluations and services provided at a school-based health center or public school.

(b) The Commissioner of Social Services shall (1) amend the Medicaid state plan, if necessary, to provide reimbursement for the suicide risk assessments and mental health evaluations and services described in subsection (a) of this section, and (2) set reimbursement at a level that ensures an adequate pool of providers for such suicide risk assessments and mental health evaluations and services.

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Sec. 10. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2023*) (a) There is established an Office of the Behavioral Health Advocate which shall be within the Insurance Department for administrative purposes only.

(b) The Office of the Behavioral Health Advocate may:

(1) Assist mental and behavioral health care providers, who are licensed, certified or registered in the state, with receiving payments for claims submitted to health carriers for services provided to covered patients;

(2) Assist state residents with accessing mental and behavioral health care and related resources;

(3) Provide information to the public, agencies, legislators and others regarding the problems and concerns of mental and behavioral health care providers and patients and make recommendations for resolving such problems and concerns;

(4) Analyze and monitor the development and implementation of federal, state and local laws, regulations and policies relating to mental and behavioral health care and recommend changes as necessary;

(5) Facilitate public comment by mental and behavioral health care providers and patients on laws, regulations and policies, including, but not limited to, the policies and actions of health carriers;

(6) Coordinate services with the Healthcare Advocate to assist individuals with obtaining access to and coverage for mental and behavioral health care services and to fulfill the duties set forth in subsections (e) and (g) of section 38a-1041 of the general statutes;

(7) Ensure that mental and behavioral health care providers and patients have timely access to the services provided by the office;

(8) Establish a toll-free number, or any other free calling option, to

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allow access to the services provided by the Behavioral Health Advocate;

(9) Pursue administrative remedies on behalf of and with the consent of any mental and behavioral health care providers and patients;

(10) Adopt regulations, pursuant to chapter 54 of the general statutes, to carry out the provisions of this section; and

(11) Take any other actions necessary to fulfill the purposes of this section.

(c) The Office of the Behavioral Health Advocate shall make a referral to the Insurance Commissioner if the Behavioral Health Advocate finds that a health carrier may have engaged in a pattern or practice that is in violation of any provision of section 38a-476a or sections 38a-488a to 38a-489, inclusive, of the general statutes.

(d) All state agencies shall comply with reasonable requests of the Office of the Behavioral Health Advocate for information and assistance.

(e) Not later than January 1, 2024, and annually thereafter, the Behavioral Health Advocate shall submit, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children, public health, and insurance and real estate a report concerning the activities of the Behavioral Health Advocate. The report shall include, but need not be limited to, (1) the subject matter, disposition and number of claims processed by the Behavioral Health Advocate on behalf of mental and behavioral health care providers and patients, (2) common problems and concerns discerned by the Behavioral Health Advocate from mental and behavioral health care providers, patients or other relevant sources, and (3) the need, if any, for administrative, legislative or executive remedies to assist mental and

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behavioral health care providers or patients.

Sec. 11. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2023*) (a) The Office of the Behavioral Health Advocate shall be under the direction of the Behavioral Health Advocate who shall be appointed by the Governor, with the approval of the General Assembly. The Behavioral Health Advocate shall be an elector of the state with expertise and experience in the fields of mental or behavioral health care, health insurance and advocacy for parity in mental and behavioral health access and outcomes. In addition to the Behavioral Health Advocate, the Office of the Behavioral Health Advocate shall consist of sufficient staff as the requirements and resources of the office permit, of whom at least one shall be an attorney and at least one shall be a patient care navigator.

(b) The Governor shall make the initial appointment of the Behavioral Health Advocate from a list of candidates prepared and submitted, not later than February 1, 2024, to the Governor by the advisory committee established pursuant to section 21 of this act. The Governor shall notify the advisory committee of the pending expiration of the term of an incumbent Behavioral Health Advocate not less than ninety days prior to the final day of the Behavioral Health Advocate's term in office. If a vacancy occurs in the position of Behavioral Health Advocate, the Governor shall notify the advisory committee immediately of the vacancy. The advisory committee shall meet to consider qualified candidates for the position of Behavioral Health Advocate and shall submit a list of not more than five candidates to the Governor ranked in order of preference, not more than sixty days after receiving notice from the Governor of the pending expiration of the Behavioral Health Advocate's term or the occurrence of a vacancy. The Governor shall designate, not more than sixty days after receipt of the list of candidates from the advisory committee, one candidate from the list for the position of Behavioral Health Advocate. If, after the list is submitted to the Governor by the advisory committee, any candidate withdraws from

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consideration, the Governor shall designate a candidate from those remaining on the list. If the Governor fails to designate a candidate within sixty days of receipt of the list from the advisory committee, the advisory committee shall refer the candidate with the highest ranking on the list to the General Assembly for confirmation. If the General Assembly is not in session at the time of the Governor's or advisory committee's designation of a candidate, the candidate shall serve as the acting Behavioral Health Advocate until the General Assembly meets and confirms the candidate as Behavioral Health Advocate. A candidate serving as acting Behavioral Health Advocate is entitled to compensation and has all the powers, duties and privileges of the Behavioral Health Advocate. A Behavioral Health Advocate shall serve a term of four years, not including any time served as acting Behavioral Health Advocate, and may be reappointed by the Governor or shall remain in the position until a successor is confirmed. Although an incumbent Behavioral Health Advocate may be reappointed, the Governor shall also consider additional candidates from a list submitted by the advisory committee as provided in this section.

(c) Upon a vacancy in the position of the Behavioral Health Advocate, the most senior attorney in the Office of the Behavioral Health Advocate shall serve as the acting Behavioral Health Advocate until the vacancy is filled pursuant to subsection (a) or (b) of this section. The acting Behavioral Health Advocate has all the powers, duties and privileges of the Behavioral Health Advocate.

Sec. 12. Subsections (a) to (c), inclusive, of section 20-195o of the general statutes are repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

(a) Application for licensure shall be on forms prescribed and furnished by the commissioner. Each applicant shall furnish evidence satisfactory to the commissioner that he or she has met the requirements of section 20-195n. The application fee for a clinical social worker license

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shall be [~~three hundred fifteen~~] two hundred dollars. The application fee for a master social worker license shall be [~~two hundred twenty~~] one hundred twenty-five dollars.

(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 20-195n concerning examinations, on or before October 1, 2015, the commissioner may issue a license without examination, to any master social worker applicant who demonstrates to the satisfaction of the commissioner that, on or before October 1, 2013, he or she held a master's degree from a social work program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education or, if educated outside the United States or its territories, completed an educational program deemed equivalent by the council.

(c) Each person licensed pursuant to this chapter may apply for renewal of such licensure in accordance with the provisions of subsection (e) of section 19a-88. A fee of [~~one~~] two hundred [~~ninety-five~~] dollars shall accompany each renewal application for [~~a licensed master social worker or~~] a licensed clinical social worker and a fee of one hundred twenty-five dollars shall accompany each renewal application for a licensed master social worker. Each such applicant shall furnish evidence satisfactory to the commissioner of having satisfied the continuing education requirements prescribed in section 20-195u.

Sec. 13. Section 20-195c of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

(a) Each applicant for licensure as a marital and family therapist shall present to the department satisfactory evidence that such applicant has: (1) Completed a graduate degree program specializing in marital and family therapy offered by a regionally accredited college or university or an accredited postgraduate clinical training program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education offered by a regionally accredited institution of higher education; (2) completed a supervised practicum or internship with

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emphasis in marital and family therapy supervised by the program granting the requisite degree or by an accredited postgraduate clinical training program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education and offered by a regionally accredited institution of higher education; (3) completed twelve months of relevant postgraduate experience, including (A) a minimum of one thousand hours of direct client contact offering marital and family therapy services subsequent to being awarded a master's degree or doctorate or subsequent to the training year specified in subdivision (2) of this subsection, and (B) one hundred hours of postgraduate clinical supervision provided by a licensed marital and family therapist; and (4) passed an examination prescribed by the department. The fee shall be [three hundred fifteen] two hundred dollars for each initial application.

(b) Each applicant for licensure as a marital and family therapist associate shall present to the department (1) satisfactory evidence that such applicant has completed a graduate degree program specializing in marital and family therapy offered by a regionally accredited institution of higher education or an accredited postgraduate clinical training program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education and offered by a regionally accredited institution of higher education, and (2) verification from a supervising licensed marital and family therapist that the applicant is working toward completing the postgraduate experience required for licensure as a marital and family therapist under subdivision (3) of subsection (a) of this section. The fee shall be [one hundred twenty-five] one hundred twenty-five dollars for each initial application.

(c) The department may grant licensure without examination, subject to payment of fees with respect to the initial application, to any applicant who is currently licensed or certified as a marital or marriage and family therapist or a marital and family therapist associate in another state, territory or commonwealth of the United States, provided

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such state, territory or commonwealth maintains licensure or certification standards which, in the opinion of the department, are equivalent to or higher than the standards of this state. No license shall be issued under this section to any applicant against whom professional disciplinary action is pending or who is the subject of an unresolved complaint.

(d) (1) A license issued to a marital and family therapist issued under this section may be renewed annually in accordance with the provisions of section 19a-88. The fee for such renewal shall be [three hundred twenty] two hundred dollars. Each licensed marital and family therapist applying for license renewal shall furnish evidence satisfactory to the commissioner of having participated in continuing education programs. The commissioner shall adopt regulations, in accordance with chapter 54, to (A) define basic requirements for continuing education programs, which shall include not less than one contact hour of training or education each registration period on the topic of cultural competency and, on and after January 1, 2016, not less than two contact hours of training or education during the first renewal period in which continuing education is required and not less than once every six years thereafter on the topic of mental health conditions common to veterans and family members of veterans, including (i) determining whether a patient is a veteran or family member of a veteran, (ii) screening for conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, risk of suicide, depression and grief, and (iii) suicide prevention training, (B) delineate qualifying programs, (C) establish a system of control and reporting, and (D) provide for waiver of the continuing education requirement for good cause.

(2) A license issued to a marital and family therapist associate (A) prior to July 1, 2023 shall expire on or before twenty-four months after the date on which such license was issued and, (B) on or after July 1, 2023 shall expire on or before twelve months after the date on which

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such license was issued. Such license may be renewed [once] not more than two times if issued prior to July 1, 2023, and not more than three times if issued on or after July 1, 2023, for an additional [twenty-four] twelve months in accordance with the provisions of section 19a-88. The fee for such renewal shall be [two hundred twenty] one hundred twenty-five dollars. Each licensed marital and family therapist associate applying for license renewal shall furnish evidence satisfactory to the commissioner of working toward completing the postgraduate experience required for licensure as a marital and family therapist under subdivision (3) of subsection (a) of this section and the potential for successful completion of such experience prior to the expiration of the [twenty-four month] twelve-month renewal period.

(e) Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, an applicant who is currently licensed or certified as a marital or marriage and family therapist in another state, territory or commonwealth of the United States that does not maintain standards for licensure or certification that are equivalent to or higher than the standards in this state may substitute three years of licensed or certified work experience in the practice of marital and family therapy, as defined in section 20-195a, in lieu of the requirements of subdivisions (2) and (3) of subsection (a) of this section.

Sec. 14. Subsections (a) and (b) of section 20-195cc of the general statutes are repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

(a) The Commissioner of Public Health shall grant a license (1) as a professional counselor to any applicant who furnishes evidence satisfactory to the commissioner that such applicant has met the requirements of section 20-195dd, and (2) as a professional counselor associate to any applicant who furnishes evidence satisfactory to the commissioner that such applicant has met the requirements of section 20-195dd. The commissioner shall develop and provide application

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forms. The application fee for a professional counselor shall be [three hundred fifteen] two hundred dollars. The application fee for a professional counselor associate shall be [two hundred twenty] one hundred twenty-five dollars.

(b) Licenses issued to professional counselors and professional counselor associates under this section may be renewed annually pursuant to section 19a-88. The fee for such renewal shall be [one] two hundred [ninety-five] dollars for a professional counselor and one hundred twenty-five dollars for a professional counselor associate. Each licensed professional counselor and professional counselor associate applying for license renewal shall furnish evidence satisfactory to the commissioner of having participated in continuing education programs. The commissioner shall adopt regulations, in accordance with chapter 54, to (1) define basic requirements for continuing education programs that shall include (A) not less than one contact hour of training or education each registration period on the topic of cultural competency, (B) on and after January 1, 2016, not less than two contact hours of training or education during the first renewal period in which continuing education is required and not less than once every six years thereafter on the topic of mental health conditions common to veterans and family members of veterans, including (i) determining whether a patient is a veteran or family member of a veteran, (ii) screening for conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, risk of suicide, depression and grief, and (iii) suicide prevention training, and (C) on and after January 1, 2018, not less than three contact hours of training or education each registration period on the topic of professional ethics, (2) delineate qualifying programs, (3) establish a system of control and reporting, and (4) provide for a waiver of the continuing education requirement for good cause.

Sec. 15. Section 24 of public act 22-81 is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

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(a) There is established a task force to continue to study the comprehensive needs of children in the state and the extent to which such needs are being met by educators, community members and local and state agencies. The task force shall (1) address subdivisions (1) to (6), inclusive, of subsection (a) of section 30 of public act 21-46, (2) provide recommendations to meet the demand for infant and toddler care in the state by increasing access to and enrollment in child care centers, group child care homes and family child care homes, and identify resources to assist such centers and homes in meeting such demand, [and] (3) study the feasibility of adjusting school start times to improve students' mental and physical well-being, (4) review and analyze the efficacy of those programs designed to assist and support the needs of children and their families that have received and expended federal funds received pursuant to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, P.L. 116-136, as amended from time to time, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, P.L. 116-260, as amended from time to time, and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, P.L. 117-2, as amended from time to time, and, based on such analysis, make recommendations about which of those programs should receive a more permanent funding structure from the state, and (5) conduct a needs assessment for children that identifies gaps between existing conditions and desired outcomes, and the extent to which such gaps are attributable to the result of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on children and individuals who were enrolled in high school in the state and were members of the classes graduating from 2020 to 2023, inclusive. As used in this section, "COVID-19" means the respiratory disease designated by the World Health Organization on February 11, 2020, as coronavirus 2019, and any related mutation thereof recognized by the World Health Organization as a communicable respiratory disease.

(b) The task force shall consist of the members appointed to the task force to study the comprehensive needs of children pursuant to

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subsection (b) of section 30 of public act 21-46, except that if any member declines such appointment, a new appointee shall be selected by the appointing authority pursuant to said subsection.

(c) Any member of the task force appointed under subdivisions (1) to (6), inclusive, of subsection (b) of section 30 of public act 21-46 may be a member of the General Assembly.

(d) All initial appointments to the task force shall be made not later than thirty days after the effective date of this section. Any vacancy shall be filled by the appointing authority not later than thirty days after the vacancy occurs. If a vacancy is not filled by the appointing authority, the chairpersons of the task force may fill such vacancy.

(e) The speaker of the House of Representatives and the president pro tempore of the Senate shall select the chairpersons of the task force from among the members of the task force. Such chairpersons shall schedule the first meeting of the task force, which shall be held not later than sixty days after the effective date of this section.

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

(g) Not later than January 1, 2023, and January 1, [2024] 2025, the task force shall update the report issued pursuant to subsection (g) of section 30 of public act 21-46, and submit such updated report and any additional findings and recommendations to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes. The task force shall terminate on the date that it submits such report or [January 1, 2024] July 1, 2025, whichever is later.

Sec. 16. (*Effective July 1, 2023*) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, the Department of Social Services shall hire temporary and part-time

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employees who will be responsible for collaborating with nonprofit organizations to identify and enroll eligible children in the HUSKY Health program.

Sec. 17. (*Effective July 1, 2023*) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, the Department of Education shall award a grant to and collaborating with a nonprofit organization that specializes in identifying and providing services for at-risk teenage students who are experiencing depression, anxiety, substance abuse struggles and trauma and conflict-related stresses, for the purpose of training school behavioral health providers to be able to identify and provide services for such at-risk teenage students. The department may, within available appropriations, hire one full-time employee who will be responsible for implementing the provisions of this section.

Sec. 18. Subparagraph (A) of subdivision (2) of section 46b-129a of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2023*):

(2) (A) A child shall be represented by counsel knowledgeable about representing such children who shall be assigned to represent the child by the office of Chief Public Defender, or appointed by the court if there is an immediate need for the appointment of counsel during a court proceeding. Such assignment or appointment shall continue for the duration of any such proceeding under section 46b-129, notwithstanding such child's attainment of eighteen years of age. If the child's parent or guardian has been accused by a competent witness of abusing the child, or of causing the child to be neglected or uncared for, upon the assignment or appointment of counsel, such counsel shall be granted immediate access to (i) records relating to the child, including, but not limited to, Department of Social Services records and medical, mental health and substance abuse treatment, law enforcement and educational records, without the necessity of securing further releases, and (ii) the child, for the purpose of consulting with the child privately.

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The court shall give the parties prior notice of such assignment or appointment. Counsel for the child shall act solely as attorney for the child.

Sec. 19. (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity, established pursuant to section 2-127 of the general statutes, shall, in collaboration with the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative, established pursuant to section 10-222q of the general statutes, as amended by this act, and one or more community-based bereavement and grief counseling resource centers serving children and families, conduct a study of community-based bereavement and grief counseling organizations and services for children and families to determine the (1) extent and availability of such organizations and services state-wide, and (2) feasibility of and recommendations for implementation of a state-wide program for the delivery of such services at no cost to participants. Such recommendations shall include, but need not be limited to, the types of services the program should provide, eligibility criteria for children and families to access such services, the optimal geographic distribution of such services and opportunities to utilize gifts, grants or donations from private sources and any available federal funding to fund such program in whole or in part.

(b) Not later than January 1, 2024, the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity shall submit a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children. Such report shall include the findings of the study conducted pursuant to subsection (a) of this section and any legislative recommendations for the implementation of a state-wide program for the delivery of bereavement and grief counseling services for children and families.

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Sec. 20. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2024*) (a) As used in this section:

(1) "Free play" means unstructured, voluntary, child-initiated activities that are performed by a child for self-amusement and have behavioral, social and psychomotor rewards, except "free play" may be structured to promote activities that are child-directed, joyful and spontaneous.

(2) "Guided play" means learning experiences that combine the child-directed nature of free play with a focus on learning outcomes and adult guidance.

(3) "Play-based learning" means a pedagogical approach that emphasizes play in promoting learning and includes developmentally appropriate strategies that can be integrated with existing learning standards. "Play-based learning" does not mean time spent in recess or as part of a physical education course or instruction.

(4) "Recess" means the time during the regular school day for each student enrolled in elementary school that is devoted to physical exercise of not less than twenty minutes in total pursuant to section 10-221o of the general statutes.

(5) "Mobile electronic device" has the same meaning as provided in section 10-222d of the general statutes.

(6) "Instructional time" means the time of actual school work during a regular school day.

(b) Each local and regional board of education shall provide for play-based learning during the instructional time of each regular school day for all students in kindergarten and any preschool program offered by the board. Such play-based learning shall (1) be incorporated and integrated into daily practice, (2) allow for the needs of such students to be met through free play, guided play and games, and (3) be

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predominantly free of the use of mobile electronic devices.

(c) Each local and regional board of education shall permit a teacher to utilize play-based learning during the instructional time of a regular school day for all students in grades one to five, inclusive. Such play-based learning (1) may be incorporated and integrated into daily practice, (2) shall allow for the needs of such students to be met through free play, guided play and games, and (3) shall be predominantly free of the use of mobile electronic devices.

(d) Any play-based learning utilized under this section shall comply with the individualized education program or plan pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended from time to time, for any student.

(e) A school employee may only prevent or otherwise restrict a student's participation in play-based learning if such prevention or restriction is in accordance with the policy developed by the local or regional board of education pursuant to section 10-221o of the general statutes.

Sec. 21. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2023*) (a) There is established an advisory committee to the Office of the Behavioral Health Advocate which shall meet four times a year with the Behavioral Health Advocate and the staff of the Office of the Behavioral Health Advocate to review and assess the performance of the Office of the Behavioral Health Advocate. The advisory committee shall consist of seven members appointed one each by the president pro tempore of the Senate, the speaker of the House of Representatives, the majority leader of the Senate, the majority leader of the House of Representatives, the minority leader of the Senate, the minority leader of the House of Representatives and the Governor. Each member of the advisory committee shall serve a term of five years and may be reappointed at the conclusion of that term. All initial appointments to the advisory committee shall be made

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not later than October 1, 2023.

(b) The advisory committee shall make an annual evaluation of the effectiveness of the Office of the Behavioral Health Advocate and shall submit the evaluation to the Governor and the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to public health and insurance not later than January 1, 2025, and annually thereafter.

Sec. 22. Section 17a-215d of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

(a) There is established the Autism Spectrum Disorder Advisory Council. The council shall consist of the following members: (1) The Commissioner of Social Services, or the commissioner's designee; (2) the Commissioner of Children and Families, or the commissioner's designee; (3) the Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee; (4) the Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services, or the commissioner's designee; (5) the Commissioner of Public Health, or the commissioner's designee; (6) the Commissioner of Aging and Disability Services, or the commissioner's designee; (7) the Commissioner of Developmental Services, or the commissioner's designee; (8) the Commissioner of Early Childhood, or the commissioner's designee; (9) the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, or the secretary's designee; (10) two persons with autism spectrum disorder, one each appointed by the Governor and the speaker of the House of Representatives; (11) two persons who are parents or guardians of a child with autism spectrum disorder, one each appointed by the Governor and the minority leader of the Senate; (12) two persons who are parents or guardians of an adult with autism spectrum disorder, one each appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate and the majority leader of the House of Representatives; (13) two persons who are advocates for persons with autism spectrum disorder, one each appointed by the Governor and the speaker of the House of

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Representatives; (14) two persons who are licensed professionals working in the field of autism spectrum disorder, one each appointed by the Governor and the majority leader of the Senate; (15) two persons who provide services for persons with autism spectrum disorder, one each appointed by the Governor and the minority leader of the House of Representatives; (16) two persons who shall be representatives of an institution of higher education in the state with experience in the field of autism spectrum disorder, one each appointed by the Governor and the president pro tempore of the Senate; (17) the executive director of the nonprofit entity designated by the Governor in accordance with section 46a-10b to serve as the Connecticut protection and advocacy system, or the executive director's designee; and (18) one person who is a physician who treats or diagnoses persons with autism spectrum disorder, appointed by the Governor.

(b) The council shall have three chairpersons who shall be elected by the members of the council, provided not less than two of the persons elected as chairpersons by the members of the council shall be: (1) A person with autism spectrum disorder appointed pursuant to subdivision (10) of subsection (a) of this section, (2) a parent or guardian of a child with autism spectrum disorder appointed pursuant to subdivision (11) of subsection (a) of this section, or (3) a parent or guardian of an adult with autism spectrum disorder appointed pursuant to subdivision (12) of subsection (a) of this section. The council shall make rules for the conduct of its affairs. The council shall meet not less than four times per year and at such other times as requested by the chairpersons. Council members shall serve without compensation.

(c) (1) The council shall advise the Commissioner of Social Services concerning: [(1)] (A) Policies and programs for persons with autism spectrum disorder; [(2)] (B) services provided by the Department of Social Services' Division of Autism Spectrum Disorder Services; and [(3)] (C) implementation of the recommendations resulting from the

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autism feasibility study.

(2) The council may (A) make recommendations to the commissioner for policy and program changes to improve support services for persons with autism spectrum disorder; (B) identify strategies and methods of improving outreach and coordination of services associated with autism spectrum disorders for racial minority group members; and (C) identify and recommend updates to existing state guidelines for early screening and intervention for autism spectrum disorders, including, but not limited to, revisions to best practice protocols to include developmental screening for children three years of age and younger.

Sec. 23. Section 10-222q of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

(a) There is established a social and emotional learning and school climate advisory collaborative. The collaborative shall (1) collect information concerning the school climate improvement efforts of local and regional boards of education, (2) document any needs articulated by local and regional boards of education for technical assistance and training relating to fostering positive school climates, (3) identify best practices for promoting positive school climates, (4) direct resources to support state-wide and local initiatives on issues relating to fostering and improving positive school climates and improving access to social and emotional learning in schools, (5) develop an assessment for screening students in grades three to twelve, inclusive, to determine whether such students are at risk for suicide, (6) develop a biennial state-wide school climate survey, as described in subsection (c) of section 2 of public act 19-166, (7) develop a model positive school climate policy, as described in subsection (a) of section 2 of public act 19-166, (8) develop a plain language explanation of the rights and remedies available under sections 10-4a and 10-4b for distribution to parents and guardians pursuant to subdivision (2) of subsection (c) of section 10-222d, and provide such explanation to each local and regional board of education

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not later than January 1, 2021, and (9) perform other functions concerning social and emotional learning and fostering positive school climates.

(b) The collaborative shall consist of the following members:

(1) Five appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives, one of whom is a member of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee, established pursuant to section 46b-121n; one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education; one of whom is a school administrator with experience in district-level, equity-focused and cross-disciplinary social and emotional learning; one of whom is a representative of an organization that provides free or reduced-cost legal services; and one of whom is a representative of Connecticut Parent Power;

(2) Five appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate, one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut Association of Schools; one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut Association of School Administrators; one of whom is a representative of the Social Emotional Learning Alliance for Connecticut; one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut School Counselor Association; and one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents;

(3) Three appointed by the majority leader of the House of Representatives, one of whom is a representative of Special Education Equity for Kids of Connecticut; one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center; and one of whom is a representative of African Caribbean American Parents of Children with Disabilities, Inc.;

(4) Three appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, one of whom is a representative of the Center for Children's Advocacy; one of whom

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is a representative of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence; and one of whom is a representative of the Neag School of Education at The University of Connecticut;

(5) Three appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives, one of whom is a representative of the American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut; one of whom is a representative of the Center for Social and Emotional Learning at Central Connecticut State University; and one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut Parent Teacher Association;

(6) Three appointed by the minority leader of the Senate, one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut Education Association; one of whom is a representative of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Connecticut; and one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut Suicide Advisory Board established pursuant to section 17a-52;

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

(8) The chairpersons and ranking members of the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children and education;

(9) The Child Advocate, or the Child Advocate's designee; and

(10) The executive director of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity, or the executive director's designee.

(c) All appointments to the collaborative shall be made not later than thirty days after the effective date of this section. Any vacancy shall be filled by the appointing authority.

(d) The cochairpersons of the collaborative shall be the executive director of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity, or the executive director's designee, and a cochairperson

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elected from among the members. The first meeting of the collaborative shall be held not later than sixty days after the effective date of this section.

(e) The collaborative may designate subcommittees and advisory groups to carry out its functions, provided any subcommittees so designated shall be comprised of members of the collaborative.

(f) The staff of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity shall serve as administrative staff of the collaborative.

(g) Not later than January 1, 2021, and annually thereafter, the collaborative shall submit a report concerning (1) its efforts to (A) monitor the school climate improvement efforts of local and regional boards of education, (B) document needs articulated by local and regional boards of education for technical assistance and training relating to fostering positive school climates, (C) identify best practices for promoting positive school climates, and (D) direct resources to support state-wide and local initiatives on issues relating to fostering and improving positive school climates and improving access to social and emotional learning, and (2) any recommendations, including recommendations concerning ways in which to promote the social and emotional development of young children, ages birth to five, inclusive, covered under the state Medicaid program, by identifying age-appropriate methods of screening, assessment, diagnosis, treatment and more, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children and education, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a.

Approved June 26, 2023