General Assembly

Amendment

January Session, 2025

LCO No. **9962**

Offered by:

SEN. LOONEY, 11th Dist.
SEN. DUFF, 25th Dist.
SEN. MCCRORY, 2nd Dist.
SEN. GADKAR-WILCOX, 22nd Dist.
SEN. MAHER, 26th Dist.
REP. RITTER, 1st Dist.
REP. ROJAS, 9th Dist.

To: Subst. Senate Bill No. **1** File No. 637 Cal. No. 341

"AN ACT INCREASING RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS, SCHOOLS AND SPECIAL EDUCATION."

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

"Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) Commencing on July 1, 2025, there is established the Early Childhood Education Endowment. The endowment shall constitute an instrumentality of the state and shall perform essential governmental functions as provided in sections 1 to 15, inclusive, of this act. The endowment shall receive and hold all payments and deposits or contributions intended for the endowment, as well as gifts, bequests, endowments or federal, state or local grants and any other funds from any public or private source and all earnings until released in accordance with section 3 of this act.

(b) The endowment shall not be construed to be a department,

institution or agency of the state. Amounts on deposit in the endowment shall not be commingled with state funds and the state shall have no claim to or against, or interest in, such funds. Any contract entered into by or any obligation of the endowment shall not constitute a debt or obligation of the state and the state shall have no obligation to any designated beneficiary or any other person on account of the endowment and all amounts obligated to be paid from the endowment shall be limited to amounts available for such obligation on deposit in the endowment. The amounts on deposit in the endowment may only be released in accordance with the provisions of section 3 of this act. The endowment shall continue in existence as long as it holds any deposits or has any obligations and until its existence is terminated by law and upon termination any unclaimed assets shall return to the state. Property of the endowment shall not be governed by section 3-61a of the general statutes.

(c) The Treasurer shall be responsible for the receipt, maintenance, administration, investing and release of amounts from the endowment. The endowment shall not receive deposits in any form other than cash.

Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, based on an estimate prepared by the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management between June 15, 2025, to June 30, 2025, inclusive, of the amount of current unappropriated surplus for such fiscal year, the amount of such estimated surplus, if any, up to a maximum of three hundred million dollars shall be transferred on or before June 30, 2025, by the Treasurer from the General Fund to the Early Childhood Education Endowment established under section 1 of this act.

(b) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026, and each fiscal year thereafter, based on such estimated amount of current unappropriated surplus described in subsection (a) of this section, if any, the entire amount of such estimated surplus for each such fiscal year shall be transferred by the Treasurer from the General Fund to the Early Childhood Education Endowment, except that if the amount in the

Budget Reserve Fund is estimated by the secretary to be less than eighteen per cent of the estimated net General Fund appropriations for the ensuing fiscal year, the amount of such transfer shall be reduced by the amount necessary to increase the amount in the Budget Reserve Fund to eighteen per cent of the estimated net General Fund appropriations for the ensuing fiscal year, or by the maximum amount of the projected surplus, whichever is less, and an amount equal to such reduction shall be transferred to the Budget Reserve Fund.

(c) If the Comptroller determines that a deficit will exist for the preceding fiscal year, before the appropriation required by subdivision (1) of subsection (f) of section 4-30a of the general statutes, the amount necessary to fund such deficit shall be deducted from the amount transferred in such preceding fiscal year pursuant to this section and credited to the General Fund effective June thirtieth of such preceding fiscal year. If such deficit exceeds the amount transferred in such preceding fiscal year, no additional funds from the body of the endowment shall be used to fund such deficit.

Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) For the fiscal years ending June 30, 2026, and June 30, 2027, the Treasurer, in consultation with the Early Childhood Education Endowment Advisory Board, shall annually authorize the release of funds from the Early Childhood Education Endowment in an amount not to exceed twelve per cent of the total amount of the endowment to the Commissioner of Early Childhood. Such released funds shall be expended by the Commissioner of Early Childhood in accordance with the provisions of section 4 of this act.

(b) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2028, and each fiscal year thereafter, the Treasurer shall, in consultation with the Early Childhood Education Endowment Advisory Board, annually authorize the release of funds from the endowment in an amount not to exceed ten per cent of the total amount of the endowment to the Commissioner of Early Childhood. Such released funds shall be expended by the Commissioner of Early Childhood in accordance with the provisions of section 4 of this act.

Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) As used in this section:

(1) "Expansion costs" includes expenses to increase early care and education program provider payment rates, increase equitable access and affordability of high quality early childhood education, extend the hours of operation per day or portion of the year covered or to sustain services previously funded by the Early Childhood Education Endowment;

(2) "Programmatic costs" includes costs for parent and early care and education program enrollment campaigns, local governance partners, needs assessment technical assistance, facilities program technical assistance and workforce recruitment and scholarships for educators in alignment with the early childhood priorities of the Early Childhood Education Endowment Advisory Board and the Office of Early Childhood; and

(3) "Administrative costs" includes costs relating to (A) personnel, including, but not limited to, the salary and fringe benefits of the employees of the Treasurer's office responsible for administering the Early Childhood Education Endowment and the employees of the Office of Early Childhood and the Department of Education responsible for administering programming that utilizes funds from the endowment, and the stipends provided to parent and program provider members of the Early Childhood Education Endowment Advisory Board pursuant to subsection (g) of section 8 of this act, and (B) data and technology, including, but not limited to, the development and maintenance of payment or parent enrollment portals, establishing or managing memoranda of understanding between the Office of Early Childhood and other states agencies related to the provision of child care.

(b) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026, the Commissioner of Early Childhood, upon receipt of the funds released by the Treasurer from the Early Childhood Education Endowment pursuant to section 3 of this act, is authorized to expend such funds for the following purposes and in

the following manner: (1) Up to eight per cent of such released funds for administrative costs, and (2) of such remaining released funds (A) three hundred thousand dollars for the health insurance subsidy program established pursuant to section 15 of this act, and (B) the remaining balance for expansion costs and programmatic costs.

(c) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027, the Commissioner of Early Childhood, upon receipt of the funds released by the Treasurer from the endowment pursuant to section 4 of this act, is authorized to expend such funds for the following purposes and in the following manner: (1) Up to twelve per cent of such released funds for administrative costs, and (2) of such remaining released funds (A) ten million dollars for the health insurance subsidy program established pursuant to section 15 of this act, and (B) the remaining balance for expansion costs and programmatic costs.

(d) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2028, and each fiscal year thereafter, the Commissioner of Early Childhood, upon receipt of the funds released by the Treasurer from the endowment pursuant to section 4 of this act, is authorized to expend such funds for the following purposes and in the following manner: (1) Up to seven per cent of such released funds for administrative costs, and (2) of such remaining released funds for (A) the health insurance subsidy program established pursuant to section 15 of this act, and (B) expansion costs and programmatic costs.

(e) Any funds from the endowment that have been released by the Treasurer to the Commissioner of Early Childhood pursuant to section 4 of this act shall:

(1) Supplement and not supplant any other local, state or federal funds otherwise available for early childhood care and education;

(2) Not be comingled with any state or federal funding received under the child care development block grant pursuant to the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990; and

(3) Not lapse if not expended by the commissioner at the end of the fiscal year and shall be transferred to the Treasurer and deposited in the endowment.

Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026, and each fiscal year thereafter, the Commissioner of Early Childhood may expend, in accordance with the provisions of section 4 of this act, funds released by the Treasurer from the Early Childhood Education Endowment, pursuant to section 3 of this act, to any early care and education program providing child care services, as described in section 19a-77 of the general statutes, or preschool program operated by a local or regional board of education that is (1) receiving financial assistance under Early Start CT pursuant to section 10-550b of the general statutes, (2) participating in the quality improvement system established by the Office of Early Childhood under subdivision (15) of subsection (b) of section 10-500 of the general statutes, and (3) participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, 42 USC 1766, as amended from time to time, unless such program has received a waiver from participation in said program by the Commissioner of Early Childhood or is a public school preschool program that offers free or reduced priced lunches pursuant to federal law and regulations.

Sec. 6. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) On and after July 1, 2027, any expansion of spaces in early care and education programs paid for with funds from the Early Childhood Education Endowment under section 4 of this act shall be for at least thirty-five per cent infant and toddler spaces.

Sec. 7. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2028, and each fiscal year thereafter, the family contribution for child care services provided by an early care and education program that is receiving funding from the Early Childhood Education Endowment shall be as follows:

(1) Any family with an annual gross income of less than one hundred thousand dollars shall not be financially responsible for the cost of such

child care services; and

(2) Any family with an annual gross income of one hundred thousand dollars or greater shall be financially responsible for an amount up to seven per cent of such family's annual gross income.

(b) Any family contribution collected by an early care and education program that is receiving funding from the endowment shall be reported in a form and in such manner as prescribed by the Office of Early Childhood. Such amount so collected shall be deducted from the overall rate paid by the Office of Early Childhood to such program and settled in reconciliation.

Sec. 8. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established the Early Childhood Education Endowment Advisory Board. The board shall be responsible for (1) providing oversight of the administration of the Early Childhood Education Endowment, (2) ensuring that funds from the endowment are expended in accordance with the provisions of section 4 of this act, (3) reviewing all reports and expenditure plans concerning the endowment submitted by the Treasurer and Commissioner of Early Childhood, (4) reviewing and assessing the outcomes related to the expenditure of funds from the endowment, and (5) preparing and submitting reports and recommendations to the General Assembly concerning the administration of the endowment and permissible expenditure of funds from the endowment, including recommendations for expansion of permissible expenditures of funds from the endowment.

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

(1) Two appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives, one of whom shall be a parent who is a member of the parent cabinet established by the Office of Early Childhood pursuant to section 10-500 of the general statutes, and one of whom shall be a member of the House of Representatives;

(2) Two appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate, one of

whom shall be the licensee of a family child care home, and one of whom shall be a member of the Senate;

(3) Two appointed by the majority leader of the House of Representatives, one of whom shall be an educator in an early care and education program in the state, and one of whom shall be the parent or guardian of a child receiving services under the birth-to-three program established under section 17a-248b of the general statutes;

(4) Two appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, one of whom shall be a representative of a philanthropic organization that is engaged in early childhood education issues or child care issues in the state, and one of whom shall be a special education teacher or administrator in a public school preschool program that is providing services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 USC 1431 et seq., as amended from time to time;

(5) One appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives, who is a representative of a child care center;

(6) One appointed by the minority leader of the Senate, who is an educator in a preschool program provided by a local or regional board of education;

(7) Two appointed by the Governor, one of whom shall be a representative of a corporation with a significant physical presence in the state and that employs individuals who may benefit from early childhood education and state child care initiatives, and one of whom shall be a representative from a Head Start program;

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

and

(11) The Treasurer, or the Treasurer's designee.

(c) All initial appointments to the board shall be made not later than September 1, 2025. Each appointed member shall serve in accordance with the provisions of section 4-1a of the general statutes, and the appointing authorities shall appoint members to ensure representation on the board of all geographic areas in the state, to the extent practicable. Any vacancy shall be filled by the appointing authority. Any vacancy occurring other than by expiration of term shall be filled for the balance of the unexpired term.

(d) The Commissioner of Early Childhood, or the commissioner's designee, the member of the House of Representatives and the member of the Senate shall serve as the chairpersons of the board. The chairpersons shall jointly schedule the first meeting of the board to be held not later than October 1, 2025. The board shall meet at least quarterly, and host an annual public hearing prior to the completion of the annual report described in subsection (f) of this section.

(e) The Treasurer, or the Treasurer's designee, shall, at the first meeting of the board and semiannually thereafter, submit to the board an actuarial chart that includes a review of the total amount of funds within the endowment, the health of the investments of the endowment, the anticipated growth of the endowment and any recommended models for the timing and rate of drawing down from the endowment.

(f) Not later than January 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, the board shall develop a report that includes, but is not limited to, (1) the financial health and actuarial future of the endowment based on information received from the Treasurer, (2) the expenditures of funds from the endowment, (3) status updates of early care and education programs, early childhood educators, families and children served, and (4) any recommendations for legislation. The board shall submit such report to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having

cognizance of matters relating to education, children, appropriations and finance, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes.

(g) The members of the board shall serve without compensation, except the parent and program provider members of the board may, within available resources, be provided a stipend for serving on the board.

(h) The board shall be within the office of the Treasurer for administrative purposes only.

Sec. 9. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) On and after July 1, 2026, the Commissioner of Early Childhood shall submit recommendations to the Early Childhood Education Endowment Advisory Board on indicators for prioritization in a competitive procurement process when considering programs for expansion costs, as defined in section 4 of this act.

Sec. 10. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) Not later than January 1, 2032, and every five years thereafter, the Commissioner of Early Childhood shall prepare an impact analysis concerning the operations of the Early Childhood Education Endowment and the effect that the expenditure of funds from the endowment have had on the availability, affordability and quality of early child care in the state. Such impact analysis shall include, but need not be limited to, (1) a report on the solvency of the endowment prepared by the Treasurer, and (2) an analysis of the effect that the expenditure of funds from the endowment has had on (A) early care and education programs receiving financial assistance under Early Start CT pursuant to section 10-550b of the general statutes, (B) early care and education programs that are not receiving state financial assistance, (C) access of families to early care and education programs receiving state financial assistance under Early Start CT, (D) tuition and family contribution rates, (E) early childhood educator salaries and benefits, and (F) the state-wide demand for child care.

(b) Not later than July 1, 2031, the commissioner shall submit such impact analysis to the Early Childhood Education Endowment Advisory Board and to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education, children, appropriations and finance, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes.

Sec. 11. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) Upon receipt and review of the impact analysis prepared by the Commissioner of Early Childhood pursuant to section 10 of this act, and following consultation with the Treasurer regarding the solvency of the Early Childhood Education Endowment, the Early Childhood Education Endowment Advisory Board shall develop recommendations concerning the expansion of permissible expenditures of funds from the endowment under section 4 of this act. Not later than January 1, 2032, the advisory board shall submit such recommendations to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education, children, appropriations and finance, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes.

Sec. 12. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Treasurer, on behalf of the Early Childhood Education Endowment and for purposes of the endowment, may:

(1) Receive and invest moneys in the endowment in any instruments, obligations, securities or property in accordance with section 13 of this act;

(2) Enter into one or more contractual agreements, including contracts for legal, actuarial, accounting, custodial, advisory, management, administrative, advertising, marketing and consulting services for the endowment, and pay for such services from the assets of the endowment;

(3) Procure insurance in connection with the endowment's property, assets, activities or deposits to the endowment;

(4) Apply for, accept and expend gifts, grants or donations from public or private sources to enable the endowment to carry out its objectives;

(5) Adopt regulations in accordance with chapter 54 of the general statutes for purposes of sections 1 to 15, inclusive, of this act;

(6) Sue and be sued;

(7) Establish one or more funds within the endowment; and

(8) Take any other action necessary to carry out the purposes of sections 1 to 15, inclusive, of this act and incidental to the duties imposed on the Treasurer pursuant to said sections.

(b) The Treasurer, on behalf of the endowment and for purposes of the endowment, shall enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Commissioner of Early Childhood to establish information-sharing practices for purposes of sections 1 to 15, inclusive, of this act. Such memorandum of understanding shall be in accordance with applicable state and federal laws.

Sec. 13. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) Notwithstanding the provisions of sections 3-13 to 3-13h, inclusive, of the general statutes, the Treasurer shall invest the amounts on deposit in the Early Childhood Education Endowment in a manner reasonable and appropriate to achieve the objectives of the endowment, exercising the discretion and care of a prudent person in similar circumstances with similar objectives. The Treasurer shall give due consideration to rate of return, risk, term or maturity, diversification of the total portfolio within the endowment, liquidity, the projected disbursements and expenditures and the expected payments, deposits, contributions and gifts to be received. The Treasurer shall not require the endowment to invest directly in obligations of the state or any political subdivision of the state or in any investment or other fund administered by the Treasurer. The assets of the endowment shall be continuously invested and reinvested in a manner consistent with the objectives of the endowment until disbursed

for eligible expenditures or expended on expenses incurred by the operations of the endowment.

Sec. 14. Section 3-13c of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

As used in sections 3-13 to 3-13e, inclusive, and 3-31b, "trust funds" includes the Connecticut Municipal Employees' Retirement Fund A, the Connecticut Municipal Employees' Retirement Fund B, the Soldiers, Sailors and Marines Fund, the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Trust Fund, the State's Attorneys' Retirement Fund, the Teachers' Annuity Fund, the Teachers' Pension Fund, the Teachers' Survivorship and Dependency Fund, the School Fund, the State Employees Retirement Fund, the Hospital Insurance Fund, the Policemen and Firemen Survivor's Benefit Fund, any trust fund described in subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of section 7-450 that is administered, held or invested by the State Treasurer, the Connecticut Baby Bond Trust, any Climate Change and Coastal Resiliency Reserve Fund created pursuant to section 7-159d, the Early Childhood Education Endowment and all other trust funds administered, held or invested by the State Treasurer.

Sec. 15. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) As used in this section:

(1) "Health benefit plan" and "qualified health plan" have the same meanings as provided in section 38a-1080 of the general statutes;

(2) "Health insurance subsidy" means an amount that is a portion of the remaining balance of the cost of a qualified health plan after the application of all available income tax credits, employer contributions and other subsidies; and

(3) "Early care and education program" means a program providing child care services, as described in section 19a-77 of the general statutes, that is licensed by the Office of Early Childhood.

(b) Not later than January 1, 2026, the Connecticut Health Insurance

Exchange, established pursuant to section 38a-1081 of the general statutes, shall study the level of need for coverage under a health benefit plan that exists for employees of early care and education programs for the purpose of modeling and estimating the cost of operating a health insurance subsidy program for such employees pursuant to subsection (c) of this section. Such study shall include, but need not be limited to, gathering data from the Office of Early Childhood and other resources to assess (1) the size and demographics of the population of such employees, (2) the number of such employees without coverage under a health benefit plan, and (3) any other information required to effectively model and estimate the cost of such program.

(c) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027, the Connecticut Health Insurance Exchange and the Office of Early Childhood shall jointly establish, based on the model developed pursuant to subsection (b) of this section, a health insurance subsidy program for employees of early care and education programs through which such employees may apply to the exchange to receive a health insurance subsidy that is applied to the cost of a qualified health plan purchased through the exchange, whether such plan is an individual health plan, an employer reimbursement arrangement authorized pursuant to federal law or a group health plan offered by an employer. The exchange and the office shall jointly develop eligibility criteria for the health insurance subsidy program that includes, but is not limited to, such employee (1) being ineligible for Medicaid, and (2) applying for and accepting all available income tax credits, employer contributions and other subsidies applicable to the cost of a health benefit plan. The exchange shall post such eligibility requirements and the application forms for the health insurance subsidy program in a conspicuous location on its Internet web site.

(d) Not later than May 1, 2026, the Connecticut Health Insurance Exchange shall submit to the Early Childhood Education Endowment Advisory Board, established pursuant to section 8 of this act, a recommendation for the amount of the health insurance subsidy

available to participants under the health insurance subsidy program for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027, based on the amount allocated for such purpose in the Early Childhood Education Endowment, established pursuant to section 1 of this act, and the estimated number of participants in the health insurance subsidy program for such fiscal year. On or before June 30, 2026, the Early Childhood Education Endowment Advisory Board shall approve or modify such recommendation. The amount of such health insurance subsidy shall be applied directly to the cost of a qualified benefit plan and may not be distributed to any participant.

(e) The Office of Early Childhood shall contract with community organizations to coordinate outreach activities for employees of early care and education programs to assist such employees to obtain coverage under a health benefit plan, whether such coverage is through Medicaid or participation in the health insurance subsidy program.

Sec. 16. Subsection (d) of section 10-76d of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

(d) To meet its obligations under sections 10-76a to 10-76g, inclusive, any local or regional board of education may make agreements with another such board or subject to the consent of the parent or guardian of any child affected thereby, make agreements, or on and after July 1, 2019, enter into a contract with any private provider of special education services, as defined in section 10-91g, private school, or public or private agency or institution, including a group home, to provide the necessary programs or services, but no expenditures made pursuant to a contract with a private provider of special education services, private school, agency or institution for such special education shall be paid under the provisions of section 10-76g, unless (1) such contract includes a description of the educational program and other treatment the child is to receive, a statement of minimal goals and objectives which it is anticipated such child will achieve, an estimated time schedule for returning the child to the community or transferring such child to

another appropriate facility, and an explanation of how the tuition, **[**or costs**]** rates or other fees charged for services provided under the agreement or contract are to be calculated in accordance with the rate schedule established pursuant to section 3 of house bill 5001 of the current session, as amended by House Amendment Schedule "A", (2) subject to the provisions of this subsection, the educational needs of the child for whom such special education is being provided cannot be met by public school arrangements in the opinion of the commissioner who, before granting approval of such contract for purposes of payment, shall consider such factors as the particular needs of the child, the appropriateness and efficacy of the program offered by such private school, agency or institution, and the economic feasibility of comparable alternatives, and (3) commencing with the 1987-1988 school year and for each school year thereafter, each such private provider of special education services, private school, agency or institution has been approved for special education by the Commissioner of Education or by the appropriate agency for facilities located out of state, except as provided in subsection (b) of this section. Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision (2) of this subsection or any regulations adopted by the State Board of Education setting placement priorities, placements pursuant to this section and payments under section 10-76g, may be made pursuant to such a contract if the public arrangements are more costly than the private provider of special education services, private school, institution or agency, provided the private provider of special education services, private school, institution or agency meets the educational needs of the child and its program is appropriate and efficacious. Any payment under the provisions of section 10-76g or section 7 of house bill 5001 of the current session, as amended by House Amendment Schedule "A", shall include all expenditures incurred by a local or regional board of education pursuant to a contract with a private provider of special education services, private school, agency or institution **[**,**]** that is in accordance with the rate schedule and to the extent permitted under said **[**section**]** sections, during the school year in which such private provider of special education services, private school, agency or institution provided such services, even if such private

provider of special education services, private school, agency or institution is approved for special education by the Commissioner of Education during such school year. **[**Notwithstanding the provisions of this subsection to the contrary, nothing in this subsection shall (A) require the removal of a child from a nonapproved facility if the child was placed there prior to July 7, 1987, pursuant to the determination of a planning and placement team that such a placement was appropriate and such placement was approved by the Commissioner of Education, or (B) prohibit the placement of a child at a nonapproved facility if a planning and placement team determines prior to July 7, 1987, that the child be placed in a nonapproved facility for the 1987-1988 school year.**]** Each child placed in a nonapproved facility **[**as described in subparagraphs (A) and (B) of subdivision (3) of this subsection**]** may continue at **[**the**]** such nonapproved facility provided the planning and placement team**, [**or**]** a hearing officer appointed pursuant to section 10-76h or a court determines that **[**the**]** such placement **[**is appropriate**]** provides an appropriate public education and that there is not another charging entity able to offer a placement for such child that provides an appropriate public education. Expenditures incurred by any local or regional board of education **[**to maintain children in**]** as a result of such placement in such nonapproved facilities **[**as described in said subparagraphs (A) and (B) shall**]** (A) by a planning and placement team shall not be paid pursuant to the provisions of section 10-76g or section 7 of house bill 5001 of the current session, as amended by House Amendment Schedule "A", and (B) pursuant to an order of a hearing officer appointed pursuant to section 10-76h or a court may be paid pursuant to the provisions of section 10-76g and section 7 of house bill 5001 of the current session, as amended by House Amendment Schedule "A". Any local or regional board of education may enter into a contract with the owners or operators of any sheltered workshop or rehabilitation center for provision of an education occupational training program for children requiring special education who are at least sixteen years of age, provided such workshop or institution shall have been approved by the appropriate state agency. Whenever any child is identified by a local or regional board of education as a child requiring

special education and such board of education determines that the requirements for special education could be met by a program provided within the district or by agreement with another board of education except for the child's need for services other than educational services such as medical, psychiatric or institutional care or services, such board of education may meet its obligation to furnish special education for such child by paying the reasonable cost of special education instruction in a private provider of special education services, private school, hospital or other institution provided such board of education or the commissioner concurs that placement in such institution is necessary and proper and no state institution is available to meet such child's needs. Any such private provider of special education services, private school, hospital or other institution receiving such reasonable cost of special education instruction by such board of education shall submit all required documentation to such board of education for purposes of submitting claims to the Medicaid School Based Child Health Program administered by the Department of Social Services.

Sec. 17. Section 10-262j of the general statutes is amended by adding subsection (j) as follows (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

(NEW) (j) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026, and each fiscal year thereafter, any district that has received a grant under section 19 of this act, during the prior fiscal year, shall not be required to include the amount of such grant in the calculation of such district's budgeted appropriation for education for the subsequent fiscal year.

Sec. 18. (*Effective July 1, 2025*) The Department of Education shall conduct a request for information from those contractors who have (1) expertise in the mapping of transportation routes, and (2) the ability to (A) create, and annually update, recommended coordinated bus routes for all special education students traveling to and from special education outplacements in the state that (i) maximize efficiency and reduce expenses in the provision of special education and related services, and (ii) are in accordance with state and federal law, or (B) provide software or access to a digital program that would allow a state

agency to create and annually update recommended coordinated bus routes for all special education students traveling to and from special education outplacements in the state that (i) maximize efficiency and reduce expenses in the provision of special education and related services, and (ii) are in accordance with state and federal law. Not later than July 1, 2027, the department shall submit a report on the results of such request for information to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education and transportation, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes.

Sec. 19. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027, and each fiscal year thereafter, the Department of Education shall, within available appropriations, administer a competitive grant program for local and regional boards of education to support in-district or regional special education programming and services for students with disabilities. Grants awarded to local and regional boards of education under the program may be used (1) to enhance and improve existing special education programming and services in the school district or start-up costs related to the creation of in-district or regional special education programming and services for students who are currently enrolled in a program operated by a provider of special education services, as defined in section 10-91g of the general statutes, and (2) for planning and operational expenses related to such in-district or regional special education programming and services.

(b) The Commissioner of Education shall develop the application to be used by local and regional boards of education in applying for a grant under this section. The application shall include, but need not be limited to, a description of (1) the program location, (2) the student population who will be served by the programming and services, (3) the staffing needs for the programming and services, (4) any assistive technology and materials necessary to implement the programming and services, (5) any capital improvement needs, (6) the budget allocation for the

programming and services, and (7) any professional development necessary for implementation of the programming and services. A local or regional board of education shall submit such application in a form and manner prescribed by the Commissioner of Education.

(c) The commissioner shall develop criteria for reviewing and approving grant applications. Such criteria shall be based upon (1) increasing students' access to high-quality general education instruction, and (2) enhancing in-district or regional programming, such as unified classes and increased time with nondisabled peers, for students with intensive needs, including giving priority to a board of education for a town designated as an alliance district pursuant to section 10-262u of the general statutes.

(d) Any local or regional board of education that receives a grant under this section shall not expend such grant on special education programming and services provided pursuant to a contract with a third party or a private provider of special education services.

(e) Not later than September 30, 2027, and annually thereafter, any local or regional board of education that has received a grant under the program in the prior fiscal year shall submit a report to the commissioner that assesses the impact of the grant on student outcomes, including the increase in time with nondisabled peers across the school district and the number of outplaced students, and district expenditures. The report shall contain any information and data requested by the commissioner.

(f) Not later than February 1, 2028, and annually thereafter, the department shall submit a report on the progress of the program that assesses the impact of the grant on student outcomes, including the increase in time with nondisabled peers across the school district and the number of outplaced students, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes.

Sec. 20. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) Not later than December 1, 2026, the Department of Education, in consultation with the Child Advocate, shall develop, and update not less than annually thereafter, a listing of each special education program offered by (1) any regional educational service center, (2) any private provider of special education, as defined in section 10-91g of the general statutes, approved by the Commissioner of Education, and (3) any local or regional board of education that accepts out-of-district student placements. Such listing shall specify for each program the (A) types of services provided, (B) physical location where such program offers special education, (C) ages served, and (D) approved classroom size of the program.

(b) Not later than January 15, 2027, the Department of Education shall post such list on the public database maintained by the department on its Internet web site and send such list to each local and regional board of education in the state.

Sec. 21. Section 10-232a of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

(a) As used in this section and sections 10-232b and 10-232c, "nongovernmental school operator" means an operator of an interdistrict magnet school that is a third-party not-for-profit corporation approved by the Commissioner of Education, the governing council of a state or local charter school, an endowed or incorporated academy approved by the State Board of Education pursuant to section 10-34, a special education facility approved by the State Board of Education pursuant to section 10-76d, as amended by this act, the supervisory agent of a nonpublic school, **[**or**]** a cooperative arrangement pursuant to section 10-158a and a private provider of special education services, as defined in section 10-91g.

(b) Each nongovernmental school operator shall, subject to the provisions of section 31-51i, (1) require each applicant for a position with such nongovernmental school operator to state, in writing, whether such applicant has ever been convicted of a crime or whether criminal

charges are pending against such applicant at the time of such application and, if charges are pending, to state the charges and the court in which such charges are pending, (2) require each applicant to submit to a records check of the Department of Children and Families child abuse and neglect registry established pursuant to section 17a-101k, before such applicant may be hired by such nongovernmental school operator, and (3) on and after July 1, 2019, require, subject to the provisions of subsection (e) of this section, each applicant for a position with such nongovernmental school operator to submit to state and national criminal history records checks within thirty days from the date of employment and may require, subject to the provisions of subsection (e) of this section, any person hired prior to said date to submit to state and national criminal history records checks. The criminal history records checks required by this subsection shall be conducted in accordance with section 29-17a, the federal National Child Protection Act of 1993 and the federal Volunteers for Children Act of 1998. If the nongovernmental school operator receives notice of a conviction of a crime which has not previously been disclosed by such person to the nongovernmental school operator, the nongovernmental school operator may (A) terminate the contract of a certified employee, in accordance with the provisions of section 10-151, if applicable, and (B) dismiss a noncertified employee, provided such employee is notified of the reason for such dismissal. If the nongovernmental school operator receives notice of a conviction of a crime by a person holding a certificate, authorization or permit issued by the State Board of Education, the nongovernmental school operator shall send such notice to the State Board of Education. The provisions of this subsection shall not be construed to cause a nongovernmental school operator to disseminate the results of any national criminal history records check.

(c) If a nongovernmental school operator requests, a regional educational service center shall arrange for the fingerprinting of any person required to submit to state and national criminal history records checks pursuant to this section or for conducting any other method of positive identification required by the State Police Bureau of

Identification or the Federal Bureau of Investigation and shall forward such fingerprints or other positive identifying information to the State Police Bureau of Identification which shall conduct criminal history records checks in accordance with section 29-17a, the federal National Child Protection Act of 1993 and the federal Volunteers for Children Act of 1998. Such regional educational service center shall maintain such fingerprints or other positive identifying information, which may be in an electronic format, for a period of four years, at the end of which such fingerprints and positive identifying information shall be destroyed. The State Police Bureau of Identification shall provide the results of such checks to such nongovernmental school operator. No regional educational service center shall charge a fee for services under this subsection that exceeds any fee that the center may charge any applicant for a position with such center.

(d) State and national criminal history records checks for substitute teachers completed within one year prior to the date of employment with a nongovernmental school operator and submitted to the employing nongovernmental school operator shall meet the requirements of subsection (b) of this section. A nongovernmental school operator shall not require substitute teachers to submit to state and national criminal history records checks pursuant to subsection (b) of this section if they are continuously employed by such nongovernmental school operator, provided a substitute teacher is subjected to such checks at least once every five years. For purposes of this section, substitute teachers shall be deemed to be continuously employed by a nongovernmental school operator if they are employed at least one day of each school year by such nongovernmental school operator.

(e) The provisions of this section shall not apply to (1) a student employed by the nongovernmental school operator that operates a school which the student attends, or (2) a person employed by a nongovernmental school operator as a teacher for a noncredit adult class or adult education activity, as defined in section 10-67, who is not

required to hold a teaching certificate pursuant to section 10-145b for his or her position.

(f) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (g) of section 31-51i, and to the extent permissible under state and federal laws regarding the dissemination of criminal history records, the State Board of Education shall, upon request of a nongovernmental school operator, make available to such nongovernmental school operator requesting information concerning an applicant for a position with such nongovernmental school operator, (1) any information concerning the applicant's eligibility for employment in a position with such nongovernmental school operator requiring a certificate, authorization or permit issued pursuant to chapter 166, (2) whether the department has knowledge that the applicant has been disciplined for a finding of abuse or neglect or sexual misconduct, as defined in section 10-222c, and any information concerning such a finding, and (3) whether the department has received notification that the applicant has been convicted of a crime or of criminal charges pending against the applicant and any information concerning such charges. The provisions of this subsection shall not be construed to cause the state board to investigate any such request or disseminate the results of any national criminal history records check.

Sec. 22. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) Each regional educational service center and private provider of special education services, as defined in section 10-91g of the general statutes, shall send written notification to the parent or legal guardian of a student receiving special education services, the local or regional board of education that has placed such student with such regional educational service center or private provider for the provision of special education services and the Department of Education regarding all staffing changes that impact the provision of such special education services, including, but not limited to, vacancies, long-term absences and assignments of long-term substitutes, not later than five business days from the occurrence of such staffing change. Such written notice shall include, but need not be

limited to, specification of (1) any change in services provided by specialists, (2) any change to student to teacher ratios, and (3) the plan to mitigate the impact of such staffing change on such student. As used in this section, "long-term" means ten or more consecutive school days.

Sec. 23. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) The Department of Education shall establish a model contract for special education transportation services to and from special education outplacements provided by providers of special education transportation services. Not later than July 1, 2026, the department shall make such model contract available to local and regional boards of education for use by such boards to enter into a contract with providers of special education transportation services for such special education transportation services.

Sec. 24. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) Not later than July 1, 2026, the Department of Education, in consultation with the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center, shall develop, and annually update, a special education family guide that assists the parents and guardians of students receiving special education and related services in understanding the process and laws governing the provision of special education. Such guide shall include, but need not be limited to, an explanation of (1) the allowable number of days to (A) diagnose that a student requires special education or related services, and (B) hold an initial planning and placement team meeting, (2) the consequences for failure of the school district to (A) meet the deadlines described in subdivision (1) of this section, and (B) include the appropriate administrators at the initial and subsequent planning and placement team processes, and (3) recourses available to parents and guardians if an in-home tutor does not attend to tutoring sessions. The department shall make such guide available on its Internet web site.

Sec. 25. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027, and each fiscal year thereafter, the Department of Education shall administer the special education training, education and testing competitive grant program. Under the grant program, the department shall award grants to individual educators and

paraeducators for the purpose of covering the costs associated with any professional training, education and testing requirements relating to such individual's ability to provide special education and related services. The department shall develop criteria for reviewing and awarding grants under the program, and such criteria shall take into consideration the financial need of the applicant and give priority to those applicants with the greatest financial need. As used in this section, "educators and paraeducators" includes individuals who are enrolled in a teacher preparation program, as defined in section 10-10a of the general statutes, candidates for professional certification as an educator under chapter 166 of the general statutes, teachers employed by a local or regional board of education, prospective paraeducators and paraeducators employed by a local or regional board of education.

(b) An educator or paraeducator may apply, in a form and manner prescribed by the department, for a grant under this section. Any educator or paraeducator receiving a grant award under the program shall use such grant to assist in covering the cost of (1) tuition or other fees associated with enrollment in a teacher preparation program offered at the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities, (2) obtaining or renewal of professional certification under chapter 166 of the general statutes with an endorsement in special education, (3) testing for paraeducators, (4) continuing education credits, and (5) any other education or testing requirements relating to such educator's or paraeducator's ability to provide special education and related services. No educator or paraeducator may receive a grant award under the program unless such educator or paraeducator commits to three years of employment to provide special education and related services in a school under the jurisdiction of a town designated as an alliance district pursuant to section 10-262u of the general statutes.

(c) The department shall develop repayment criteria for educators and paraeducators who do not complete three years of employment in a school under the jurisdiction of a town designated as an alliance district pursuant to section 10-262u of the general statutes. Any amounts

repaid to the department shall be deposited in the General Fund.

Sec. 26. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026, and each fiscal year thereafter, the Department Education shall establish a grant program to support local and regional boards of education in providing support services for students who require special education and have experienced trauma or have behavioral health needs. Such grant shall be available to each local or regional board of education that provides support services, including, but not limited to, trauma-informed care coordination and family outreach, for such students and such students' families in partnership with community service providers, including, but not limited to, family service centers. Grants shall be funded in an amount prescribed by the Commissioner of Education.

(b) On or before September 1, 2025, the Department of Education shall post in a conspicuous location on its Internet web site (1) a description of the grant program, including, but not limited to, the amount of funding available for each grant under such program, and (2) the application form for such program.

Sec. 27. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) There is established an Office of the Educational Ombudsperson, which shall be within the Office of Governmental Accountability for administrative purposes only. The Office of the Educational Ombudsperson shall serve students and families of students in the pursuit of preschool, elementary and secondary education, special education, vocational education and adult education. The Office of the Educational Ombudsperson shall be under the direction of an Educational Ombudsperson who shall be appointed by the Governor and be selected from among individuals with expertise and experience in educational advocacy, special education and educational law.

(b) The Office of the Educational Ombudsperson shall:

(1) Receive, review and attempt to resolve any complaints from

students and students' families, including, but not limited to, attempts to resolve such complaints in collaboration with schools and educators;

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

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

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

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

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

(7) On and after July 1, 2027, prioritize the office's efforts on those school districts that have been identified in the study conducted pursuant to section 30 of this act as disproportionately or over-identifying minority students for special education and related services; and

(8) Take any other actions necessary to fulfill the duties of the Office of the Educational Ombudsperson and the Educational Ombudsperson as set forth in this subsection.

(c) On or before January 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, the Educational Ombudsperson shall submit a report, in accordance with

the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the Office of Governmental Accountability and the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education and children. The Educational Ombudsperson shall report on: (1) The implementation of this section; (2) the overall effectiveness of the Educational Ombudsperson position; and (3) additional steps that need to be taken for the Educational Ombudsperson to be more effective.

Sec. 28. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) For the school year commencing July 1, 2026, and each school year thereafter, each local and regional board of education shall hire or designate an existing employee to serve as an instructional support partner in each school or in each school building under the jurisdiction of such board. An instructional support partner shall (1) alleviate the administrative burden of teachers, including, but not limited to, the administrative burden of the individualized education program process, scheduling of and taking minutes during planning and placement team meetings, attending professional development trainings, attending trainings for individualized interventions for students, attending testing, and serving as a designated staff member for the purposes of specialized responsibilities, (2) assist school-based personnel in improving the delivery and administration of the individualized education program process, (3) collaborate with parents and school personnel regarding instructional decision-making for students with disabilities, (4) pursue and attend trainings and professional development on student interventions as a representative of the school or school building, and plan and deliver professional learning activities to staff, parents and others to increase achievement for students with disabilities on the basis of such training, and (5) consult with school-based instructional staff regarding individualized education program development and writing, extended school year, behavioral interventions and transition plans for students with disabilities. Any person hired or designated to serve as the instructional support partner for the school or school building shall spend at least fifty per cent of their time performing the responsibilities described in this section.

Sec. 29. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) For the school year commencing July 1, 2026, and each school year thereafter, the Department of Education shall, at least quarterly, host trainings for persons hired or designated to serve as an instructional support partner, as described in section 28 of this act. Such training shall include, but need not be limited to, effective literacy and math instruction, personalized learning and individualized instruction for students with disabilities, improving classroom management, effective instructional methods and behavioral supports, and transition plans for students with disabilities.

Sec. 30. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Department of Education shall conduct a study concerning the disproportionate or over-identification of minority students for special education and related services. Such study shall include, but need not be limited to, an examination of the rates of identification for special education and related services, disaggregated by race and gender for each school district. Not later than January 1, 2027, the department shall submit a report on its findings and recommendations to the Office of the Educational Ombudsperson, established pursuant to section 27 of this act, and to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes.

Sec. 31. Subsection (c) of section 10-4 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

(c) Said board shall prepare every five years a five-year comprehensive plan for elementary, secondary, vocational, career and adult education. Such comprehensive plan shall include, but need not be limited to, (1) a policy statement of the State Board of Education's long-term goals and short-term objectives, including, for any comprehensive plan prepared on or after July 1, 2018, a policy statement that the demographics of educators in the public schools should reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the total population of the state, (2) an analysis of cost implications and measurement criteria and how said

board's programs and operations relate to such goals and objectives, and (3) specific action plans, target dates and strategies and methods of implementation for achieving such goals and objectives. The State Board of Education shall establish, every five years, an advisory committee to assist the board in the preparation of the comprehensive plan. Members of the advisory committee shall be appointed by the State Board of Education with representation on the committee to include, but not be limited to, representatives of the Connecticut Advisory Council on Vocational and Career Education, education organizations, parent organizations, student organizations, business and industry, organized labor and appropriate state agencies. Notwithstanding any requirement for submission of a plan for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1984, pursuant to section 10-96a of the general statutes, revision of 1958, revised to January 1, 1983, the State Board of Education shall not be required to submit the master plan for vocational and career education but shall submit, pursuant to subsection (b) of this section, the comprehensive plan for elementary and secondary, vocational, career and adult education to the Governor and the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education on or before September 1, 1996, and every five years thereafter provided, the master plan currently in effect shall remain in effect until the comprehensive plan is submitted. The Commissioner of Education shall make an annual presentation to the State Board of Education, at regularly scheduled meetings of said board, to provide updates on the strategic priorities, actions and outcomes outlined in the comprehensive plan. The State Board of Education shall be responsible for annually updating the progress in implementing the goals and objectives of the comprehensive plan based on the presentations of the commissioner and shall report on such progress to the Governor and to said standing committee annually and make such information available on the Internet web site of the Department of Education. The State Board of Education shall provide opportunity for public comment prior to its adoption of a plan.

Sec. 32. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) On or after June first, but prior

to September thirtieth annually, the superintendent of schools for each school district shall provide, at a regularly scheduled meeting of the local or regional board of education for the school district, the following:

(1) The number and names of all community-based organizations with whom the board of education has executed a formal memorandum of understanding, memorandum of agreement or contract to provide support services to students in the school district, disaggregated by school and type of support service provided;

(2) The workforce development programs offered by the board of education to students in which the board has partnered with an outside entity, including, but not limited to, cooperatives, internships, in-school job training programs provided by businesses and in-school workforce board presentations; and

(3) Attrition data for certified and noncertified staff, disaggregated by school and subject, not including in-district transfers.

Sec. 33. (*Effective from passage*) Any state agency that contributes data for the purposes of the development of the report of disconnected youth pursuant to section 22 of public act 24-45 shall post such report on the agency's Internet web site.

Sec. 34. Section 10-198d of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

(a) Not later than January 1, 2016, the Department of Education, in consultation with the Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap established pursuant to section 10-16nn, shall develop a chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan for use by local and regional boards of education to reduce chronic absenteeism in the school district.

(b) (1) The department shall semiannually review, and revise as needed, the chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan. In making such revisions, the department shall incorporate the findings of

the most recent report of disconnected youth, developed pursuant to section 22 of public act 24-45. In addition to the policies and procedures concerning truants described in section 10-198a, the plan shall include, but need not be limited to, the following: (A) Information that describes (i) chronic absenteeism, including, but not limited to, the definition of a chronically absent child under section 10-198c, and the causes of chronic absenteeism, such as poverty, violence, poor health and lack of access to transportation, (ii) the effect of chronic absenteeism on a student's academic performance, and (iii) how family and school partnerships with community resources, including, but not limited to, family resource centers and youth service bureaus, can reduce chronic absenteeism and improve student attendance, **[**and**]** (B) the use of an early indication tool provided by the department or other third party, provided such tool is designed to quickly identify students who are at risk for becoming chronically absent or disconnected from school, such as those students who (i) are at risk of not graduating or satisfying the high school graduation requirements pursuant to section 10-221a, (ii) have a history of behavioral concerns or disciplinary issues, including suspensions or expulsions, and (iii) are homeless children or youth, as defined in 42 USC 11343a, as amended from time to time, and (C) a means of collecting and analyzing data relating to student attendance, truancy and chronic absenteeism for the purpose of (i) disaggregating such data by school district, school, grade and subgroups, such as race, ethnicity, gender, eligibility for free or reduced priced lunches, housing status, students whose primary language is not English and students with disabilities, and (ii) assisting local and regional boards of education in (I) tracking chronic absenteeism over multiple years and for the current school year, (II) developing indicators to identify students who are at risk of being chronically absent children, (III) monitoring students' attendance over time, and (IV) making adjustments to interventions as they are being implemented.

(2) The chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan may include, but need not be limited to, the following: (A) A research-based and data-driven home visiting or mentorship model that addresses and

attempts to prevent or reduce chronic absenteeism through the use of mentors, such as students, teachers, administrators, intramural and interscholastic athletic coaches, school resource officers, family navigators, student success coaches and community partners, and (B) incentives and rewards that recognize schools and students that improve attendance and reduce the school chronic absenteeism rate.

Sec. 35. Section 10-222 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

Each local board of education shall prepare an itemized estimate of the cost of maintenance of public schools for the ensuing year and shall submit such estimate to the board of finance in each town or city having a board of finance, to the board of selectmen in each town having no board of finance or otherwise to the authority making appropriations for the school district, not later than two months preceding the annual meeting at which appropriations are to be made. The board or authority that receives such estimate shall, not later than ten days after the date the board of education submits such estimate, make spending recommendations and suggestions to such board of education as to how such board of education may consolidate noneducational services and realize financial efficiencies. Such board of education may accept or reject the suggestions of the board of finance, board of selectmen or appropriating authority and shall provide the board of finance, board of selectmen or appropriating authority with a written explanation of the reason for any rejection. The money appropriated by any municipality for the maintenance of public schools shall be expended by and in the discretion of the board of education. Except as provided in this subsection, any such board may transfer any unexpended or uncontracted-for portion of any appropriation for school purposes to any other item of such itemized estimate. Boards may, by adopting policies and procedures, authorize designated personnel to make limited transfers under emergency circumstances if the urgent need for the transfer prevents the board from meeting in a timely fashion to consider such transfer. All transfers made in such instances shall be

announced at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the board and a written explanation of such transfer shall be provided to the legislative body of the municipality or, in a municipality where the legislative body is a town meeting, to the board of selectmen. Expenditures by the board of education shall not exceed the appropriation made by the municipality, with such money as may be received from other sources for school purposes. If any occasion arises whereby additional funds are needed by such board, the chairman of such board shall notify the board of finance, board of selectmen or appropriating authority, as the case may be, and shall submit a request for additional funds in the same manner as is provided for departments, boards or agencies of the municipality and no additional funds shall be expended unless such supplemental appropriation shall be granted and no supplemental expenditures shall be made in excess of those granted through the appropriating authority. The annual report of the board of education shall, in accordance with section 10-224, include a summary showing (1) the total cost of the maintenance of schools, (2) the amount received from the state and other sources for the maintenance of schools, **[**and**]** (3) the net cost to the municipality of the maintenance of schools, and (4) the balance of any nonlapsing, unexpended funds account described in section 10-248a, as amended by this act. For purposes of this subsection, "meeting" means a meeting, as defined in section 1-200, and "itemized estimate" means an estimate in which broad budgetary categories including, but not limited to, salaries, fringe benefits, utilities, supplies and grounds maintenance are divided into one or more line items.

Sec. 36. Section 10-248a of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

(a) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, and each fiscal year thereafter, notwithstanding any provision of the general statutes or any special act, municipal charter, home rule ordinance or other ordinance, a local board of education may deposit into a nonlapsing account any unexpended funds from the prior fiscal year from the budgeted

appropriation for education, provided (1) such deposited amount does not exceed two per cent of the total budgeted appropriation for education for such prior fiscal year, (2) each expenditure from such account shall be made only for educational purposes, and (3) each such expenditure shall be authorized by the local board of education for such town.

(b) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026, and each fiscal year thereafter, each local board of education shall compile a report regarding the nonlapsing, unexpended funds account described in this section, including, but not limited to, the total balance of the account, the amount deposited into such account in a fiscal year and an accounting of the expenditures made from such account. Each such board shall submit such report to the Department of Education and the exclusive bargaining representative for certified employees chosen pursuant to section 10-153b.

(c) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026, and each fiscal year thereafter, each local board of education shall, not later than thirty days from the adoption of such board's budget, notify the exclusive bargaining representative for certified employees, chosen pursuant to section 10-153b, of (1) the establishment of a nonlapsing, unexpended funds account described in this section, or (2) the board's intended uses for any funds in such nonlapsing, unexpended funds account during the next fiscal year.

Sec. 37. Subdivision (2) of subsection (d) of section 10-51 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

(2) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, and each fiscal year thereafter, a regional board of education, by a majority vote of its members, may create a reserve fund for educational expenditures. Such fund shall thereafter be termed "reserve fund for educational expenditures". The aggregate amount of annual and supplemental appropriations by a district to such fund shall not exceed two per cent

of the annual district budget for such fiscal year. Annual appropriations to such fund shall be included in the share of net expenses to be paid by each member town. Supplemental appropriations to such fund may be made from estimated fiscal year end surplus in operating funds. Interest and investment earnings received with respect to amounts held in the fund shall be credited to such fund. The board shall annually submit a complete and detailed report of the condition of such fund to the member towns. Upon the recommendation and approval by the regional board of education, any part or the whole of such fund may be used for educational expenditures. Upon the approval of any such expenditure an appropriation shall be set up, plainly designated for the educational expenditure for which it has been authorized. Any unexpended portion of such appropriation remaining shall revert to said fund. If any authorized appropriation is set up pursuant to the provisions of this subsection and through unforeseen circumstances the board is unable to expend the total amount of such appropriation, the board, by a majority vote of its members, may terminate such appropriation which then shall no longer be in effect. Such fund may be discontinued, after the recommendation and approval by the regional board of education, and any amounts held in the fund shall be transferred to the general fund of the district. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026, and each fiscal year thereafter, each board shall (A) make available and annually update information regarding such fund, including, but not limited to, the total balance of the fund, the amount deposited into such fund in a fiscal year and an accounting of the expenditures made from such fund, and (B) not later than thirty days from the adoption of such board's budget, notify the exclusive bargaining representative for certified employees, chosen pursuant to section 10-153b, of (i) the establishment of the reserve fund for educational expenditures, or (ii) the board's intended uses for any funds in such fund during the next fiscal year.

Sec. 38. Subsection (a) of section 10-233d of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

(a) (1) Any local or regional board of education, at a meeting at which three or more members of such board are present, or the impartial hearing board established pursuant to subsection (b) of this section, may expel, subject to the provisions of this subsection, any pupil in grades three to twelve, inclusive, whose conduct on school grounds or at a school-sponsored activity is violative of a publicized policy of such board and is seriously disruptive of the educational process or endangers persons or property or whose conduct off school grounds is violative of such policy and is seriously disruptive of the educational process, provided a majority of the board members sitting in the expulsion hearing vote to expel and that at least three affirmative votes for expulsion are cast. In making a determination as to whether conduct is seriously disruptive of the educational process, the board of education or impartial hearing board may consider, but such consideration shall not be limited to: (A) Whether the incident occurred within close proximity of a school; (B) whether other students from the school were involved or whether there was any gang involvement; (C) whether the conduct involved violence, threats of violence or the unlawful use of a weapon, as defined in section 29-38, and whether any injuries occurred; and (D) whether the conduct involved the use of alcohol.

(2) Expulsion proceedings pursuant to this section, except as provided in subsection (i) of this section, shall be required for any pupil in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, whenever there is reason to believe that any pupil (A) on school grounds or at a school-sponsored activity, was in possession of a firearm, as defined in 18 USC 921, as amended from time to time, or deadly weapon, dangerous instrument or martial arts weapon, as defined in section 53a-3, (B) off school grounds, did possess such a firearm in violation of section 29-35 or did possess and use such a firearm, instrument or weapon in the commission of a crime under chapter 952, or (C) on or off school grounds, offered for sale or distribution a controlled substance, as defined in section 21a-240, whose manufacture, distribution, sale, prescription, dispensing, transporting or possessing with intent to sell or dispense, offering, or administering is subject to criminal penalties

under sections 21a-277 and 21a-278. Such a pupil shall be expelled for one calendar year if the local or regional board of education or impartial hearing board finds that the pupil did so possess or so possess and use, as appropriate, such a firearm, instrument or weapon or did so offer for sale or distribution such a controlled substance, provided the board of education or the hearing board may modify the period of expulsion for a pupil on a case-by-case basis, and as provided for in subdivision (2) of subsection (c) of this section.

(3) Unless an emergency exists, no pupil shall be expelled without a formal hearing held pursuant to sections 4-176e to 4-180a, inclusive, and section 4-181a, provided whenever such pupil is a minor, the notice required by section 4-177 and section 4-180 shall also be given to the parents or guardian of the pupil at least five business days before such hearing, not including the day of such hearing. If an emergency exists, such hearing shall be held as soon after the expulsion as possible. The notice shall include information concerning the parent's or guardian's and the pupil's legal rights and concerning legal services provided free of charge or at a reduced rate that are available locally and how to access such services. An attorney or other advocate may represent any pupil subject to expulsion proceedings. The parent or guardian of the pupil shall have the right to have the expulsion hearing postponed for up to one week to allow time to obtain representation, except that if an emergency exists, such hearing shall be held as soon after the expulsion as possible.

(4) (A) Prior to conducting an expulsion hearing as required by this subsection, an administrator, school counselor or school social worker at the school in which the pupil is enrolled shall contact the local homeless education liaison designated by the local or regional board of education for the school district, pursuant to Subtitle B of Title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 USC 11431 et seq., as amended from time to time, to make a determination whether such pupil is a homeless child or youth, as defined in 42 USC 11343a, as amended from time to time. If it is determined that such pupil is a

homeless child or youth, the local or regional board of education, or the impartial hearing board established pursuant to subsection (b) of this section, shall consider the impact of homelessness on the behavior of the pupil during the hearing. No such pupil may be expelled without a plan of interventions and supports to mitigate the impact of homelessness on the behavior of the student.

(B) Any pupil who is determined to be a homeless child or youth and has been expelled for a second time shall be provided a meeting with the local homeless education liaison by the local or regional board of education.

Sec. 39. Subsection (a) of section 10-233c of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

(a) Any local or regional board of education may authorize the administration of the schools under its direction to suspend from school privileges a pupil whose conduct on school grounds or at a school sponsored activity is violative of a publicized policy of such board or is seriously disruptive of the educational process or endangers persons or property or whose conduct off school grounds is violative of such policy and is seriously disruptive of the educational process. In making a determination as to whether conduct is seriously disruptive of the educational process, the administration may consider, but such consideration shall not be limited to: (1) Whether the incident occurred within close proximity of a school; (2) whether other students from the school were involved or whether there was any gang involvement; (3) whether the conduct involved violence, threats of violence or the unlawful use of a weapon, as defined in section 29-38, and whether any injuries occurred; and (4) whether the conduct involved the use of alcohol. Any such board may authorize the administration to suspend transportation services for a pupil whose conduct while awaiting or receiving transportation to and from school endangers persons or property or is violative of a publicized policy of such board. Unless an emergency exists, no pupil shall be suspended without an informal

hearing by the administration, at which such pupil shall be informed of the reasons for the disciplinary action and given an opportunity to explain the situation, provided nothing herein shall be construed to prevent a more formal hearing from being held if the circumstances surrounding the incident so require, and further provided no pupil shall be suspended more than ten times or a total of fifty days in one school year, whichever results in fewer days of exclusion, unless such pupil is granted a formal hearing pursuant to sections 4-176e to 4-180a, inclusive, and section 4-181a. If an emergency situation exists, such hearing shall be held as soon after the suspension as possible. Prior to conducting any hearing under this subsection, an administrator, school counselor or school social worker at the school in which the pupil is enrolled shall contact the local homeless education liaison designated by the local or regional board of education for the school district, pursuant to Subtitle B of Title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 USC 11431 et seq., as amended from time to time, to make a determination whether such pupil is a homeless child or youth, as defined in 42 USC 11343a, as amended from time to time. If it is determined that such pupil is a homeless child or youth, the administration shall consider the impact of homelessness on the behavior of the pupil during the hearing.

Sec. 40. Subsections (a) and (b) of section 10-16z of the general statutes are repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

(a) There is established the Early Childhood Cabinet. The cabinet shall consist of: (1) The Commissioner of Early Childhood, or the commissioner's designee, (2) the Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee, (3) the Commissioner of Social Services, or the commissioner's designee, (4) the chancellor of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities, or the chancellor's designee, (5) the Commissioner of Public Health, or the commissioner's designee, (6) the Commissioner of Developmental Services, or the commissioner's designee, (7) the Commissioner of Children and Families, or the

commissioner's designee, (8) the executive director of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity or the executive director's designee, (9) the project director of the Connecticut Head Start State Collaboration Office, (10) a parent or guardian of a child who attends or attended a school readiness program appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives, (11) a representative of a local provider of early childhood education appointed by the minority leader of the Senate, (12) a representative of the Connecticut Family Resource Center Alliance appointed by the majority leader of the House of Representatives, (13) a representative of a state-funded child care center appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, (14) two appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives, one of whom is a member of a board of education for a town designated as an alliance district, as defined in section 10-262u, and one of whom is a parent who has a child attending a school in an educational reform district, as defined in section 10-262u, (15) two appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate, one of whom is a representative of an association of early education and child care providers and one of whom is a representative of a public elementary school with a prekindergarten program, (16) ten appointed by the Governor, one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut Head Start Association, one of whom is a representative of the business community in this state, one of whom is a representative of the philanthropic community in this state, one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut State Employees Association, one of whom is an administrator of the child care development block grant pursuant to the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, one of whom is responsible for administering grants received under section 1419 of Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 USC 1419, as amended from time to time, one of whom is responsible for administering the provisions of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 20 USC 6301 et seq., one of whom is responsible for coordinating education services to children and youth who are homeless, one of whom is a licensed family child care home provider and a member of a staffed family child care network identified by the Commissioner of Early Childhood, and one of whom

is a parent recommended by a parent advisory group that has been appointed by the Commissioner of Early Childhood, (17) the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, or the secretary's designee, (18) the Lieutenant Governor, or the Lieutenant Governor's designee, (19) the Commissioner of Housing, or the commissioner's designee, **[**and**]** (20) the Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services, or the commissioner's designee, and (21) the executive director of the Connecticut Library Consortium, or a cooperating library service unit as defined in section 11-9e, or the executive director's designee.

(b) The Commissioner of Early Childhood shall serve as a cochairperson of the cabinet. The other cochairperson of the cabinet shall be appointed from among its members by the Governor. The cabinet shall meet at least quarterly. Members shall not be compensated for their services, except the following members, who are parents or guardians, may, within available appropriations, be compensated for any time and travel related to meetings of the cabinet: (1) The parent or guardian of a child who attends or attended a school readiness program and was appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives under subdivision (10) of subsection (a) of this section, (2) the parent who has a child attending a school in an educational reform district, as defined in section 10-262u, and was appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives under subdivision (14) of subsection (a) of this section, and (3) the parent who was recommended by a parent advisory group and appointed by the Governor under subdivision (16) of subsection (a) of this section.

Sec. 41. Subsection (a) of section 10-223h of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

(a) **[**The**]** For the fiscal years ending June 30, 2013, to June 30, 2027, inclusive, the Commissioner of Education shall establish, within available appropriations, a commissioner's network of schools to improve student academic achievement in low-performing schools. The commissioner may select not more than twenty-five schools in any

single school year that have been classified as a category four school or a category five school pursuant to section 10-223e to participate in the commissioner's network of schools, except the commissioner shall not select any additional school to participate in the commissioner's network of schools on or after July 1, 2025. The commissioner shall issue guidelines regarding the development of turnaround plans, and such guidelines shall include, but not be limited to, annual deadlines for the submission or nonsubmission of a turnaround plan and annual deadlines for approval or rejection of turnaround plans. The commissioner shall give preference for selection in the commissioner's network of schools to such schools (1) that volunteer to participate in the commissioner's network of schools, provided the local or regional board of education for such school and the representatives of the exclusive bargaining unit for certified employees chosen pursuant to section 10-153b mutually agree to participate in the commissioner's network of schools, (2) in which an existing collective bargaining agreement between the local or regional board of education for such school and the representatives of the exclusive bargaining unit for certified employees chosen pursuant to section 10-153b will have expired for the school year in which a turnaround plan will be implemented, or (3) that are located in school districts that (A) have experience in school turnaround reform, or (B) previously received a school improvement grant pursuant to Section 1003(g) of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 20 USC 6301 et seq. **[**The commissioner may select not more than five schools in any single school year from a single school district to participate in the commissioner's network of schools.**]** Each school so selected shall begin implementation of a turnaround plan, as described in subsection (d) of this section. Each school so selected shall participate in the commissioner's network of schools for three school years, and may continue such participation for an additional year, not to exceed two additional years, upon approval from the State Board of Education in accordance with the provisions of subsection (h) of this section, except no school that is participating in the commissioner's network of schools on July 1, 2025, may continue such participation for an additional year or an additional two years. The

commissioner shall provide funding, technical assistance and operational support to schools participating in the commissioner's network of schools and may provide financial support to teachers and administrators working at a school that is participating in the commissioner's network of schools. All costs attributable to developing and implementing a turnaround plan in excess of the ordinary operating expenses for such school shall be paid by the State Board of Education.

Sec. 42. Subsection (h) of section 10-223h of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

(h) Each school participating in the commissioner's network of schools shall participate for three school years, and may continue such participation for an additional year, not to exceed two additional years, upon approval from the State Board of Education**,** **[**. Before**]** except no school that is participating in the commissioner's network of schools on July 1, 2025, may continue such participation for an additional year or an additional two years. On and after July 1, 2025, before the end of the third year that a school is participating in the commissioner's network of schools, the commissioner shall conduct an evaluation **[**to determine whether such school is prepared to exit the commissioner's network of schools. In determining whether such school may exit the commissioner's network of schools, the commissioner shall consider whether the local or regional board of education has the capacity to ensure that such school will maintain or improve its student academic performance. If the commissioner determines that such school is ready to exit the commissioner's network of schools, the**]** of the school's participation in the commissioner's network of schools. The local or regional board of education for such school shall develop, in consultation with the commissioner, a plan, subject to the approval by the State Board of Education, for the transition of such school back to full control by the local or regional board of education. **[**If such school is not ready to exit the commissioner's network of schools and participates in the commissioner's network of schools for an additional year, the

commissioner shall conduct an evaluation in accordance with the provisions of this subsection. Before the end of the fifth year that a school is participating in the commissioner's network of schools, the commissioner shall develop, in consultation with the local or regional board of education for such school, a plan, subject to the approval by the State Board of Education, for the transition of such school back to full control by the local or regional board of education.**]**

Sec. 43. Sections 10-511 and 10-511a of the general statutes are repealed. (*Effective from passage*)"

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 2	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 3	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 4	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 5	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 6	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 7	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 8	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 9	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 10	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 11	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 12	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 13	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 14	*July 1, 2025*	3-13c
Sec. 15	*July 1, 2025*	New section
Sec. 16	*July 1, 2025*	10-76d(d)
Sec. 17	*July 1, 2025*	10-262j(j)
Sec. 18	*July 1, 2025*	New section
Sec. 19	*July 1, 2025*	New section
Sec. 20	*July 1, 2025*	New section
Sec. 21	*July 1, 2025*	10-232a
Sec. 22	*July 1, 2025*	New section
Sec. 23	*July 1, 2025*	New section
Sec. 24	*July 1, 2025*	New section
Sec. 25	*July 1, 2025*	New section

Sec. 26	*July 1, 2025*	New section
Sec. 27	*July 1, 2025*	New section
Sec. 28	*July 1, 2025*	New section
Sec. 29	*July 1, 2025*	New section
Sec. 30	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 31	*July 1, 2025*	10-4(c)
Sec. 32	*July 1, 2025*	New section
Sec. 33	*from passage*	New section
Sec. 34	*July 1, 2025*	10-198d
Sec. 35	*July 1, 2025*	10-222
Sec. 36	*July 1, 2025*	10-248a
Sec. 37	*July 1, 2025*	10-51(d)(2)
Sec. 38	*July 1, 2025*	10-233d(a)
Sec. 39	*July 1, 2025*	10-233c(a)
Sec. 40	*July 1, 2025*	10-16z(a) and (b)
Sec. 41	*July 1, 2025*	10-223h(a)
Sec. 42	*July 1, 2025*	10-223h(h)
Sec. 43	*from passage*	Repealer section