



# Connecticut State Department of Education 2025 Legislative Package

## Opportunities to: Support Students with Disabilities

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### **An Act Concerning Resources Related to Individualized Education Programs and Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act Plans**

The statute as currently written presents complications and challenges in ensuring that the “informational handout” required by law is accessible to all students across the continuum of development and with varying levels of disability. This proposal would change the requirement from a single written handout to resources and references the Student Bill of Rights.

### **An Act Concerning Funding for Special Education and Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act for Interdistrict Magnet School Students**

This proposal amends C.G.S. §10-264i(h)(1) to clarify that reasonable costs for special education services for students enrolled in an interdistrict magnet schools are deemed to mean actual costs for purposes of the statute to align with the Connecticut State Board of Education’s declaratory ruling from the Brass City Charter School petition in May 2024. The remainder of the provision remains the same with the sending district (resident town) responsible for costs and for the Planning and Placement Team meeting, and the interdistrict magnet school responsible for ensuring that students receive the services required by the individualized education program.

This proposal also amends C.G.S. §10-264i(h)(2) to change responsibility for costs associated with 504 services from the sending district (resident town) to the interdistrict magnet school for students enrolled in such school. 504 is focused toward ensuring a student has equitable access to a learning environment and often involves changes to the learning environment which makes the receiving interdistrict magnet school best situated to plan and financially support 504 accommodations.

### **An Act Concerning Funding for Special Education and Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act for Open Choice Students**

This proposal addresses services and accommodations for students with disabilities who are enrolled in the Open Choice Program in three ways: (1) the proposal amends C.G.S. §10-266aa(i) to assign responsibility for the planning and placement team (PPT) meeting and individualized education program (IEP) to the sending district (resident town); (2) the proposal clarifies that reasonable costs for special education services are deemed to mean actual costs for purposes of the statute to align with the Connecticut State Board of Education’s declaratory ruling from the Brass City Charter School petition in May 2024; and (3) the proposal assigns financial responsibility for costs associated with 504 services to the receiving Open Choice district.

There is inconsistency among Open Choice districts on the planning responsibility for students eligible for special education services and on the funding responsibility for 504 supports and this amendment clarifies those responsibilities. Under current law, the sending district (resident town) is financially responsible for the student’s special education services under the individualized education program (IEP) but the statute does not identify which district is responsible for determining the services. Assigning responsibility to the sending district for the planning and placement team meeting (PPT) and IEP, aligns with the framework under the magnet statutes and affords the sending district participation in the planning for services for which the sending district is financially responsible.

The proposal also clarifies financial responsibility for 504 services and assigns such responsibility to the receiving Open Choice district for students participating in Open Choice. 504 is focused toward ensuring a student has equitable access to a learning environment and often involves changes to the learning environment which makes the receiving Open Choice district best situated to plan and financially support 504 accommodations.

### **An Act Concerning a Tuition Cost Schedule for Approved Private Special Education Programs (APSEPs)**

This proposal would set a tuition schedule for approved private special education program's (APSEP) base tuition and cost for services for students with disabilities to assist the contracted Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to appropriately prepare for the current and subsequent year tuition costs. Requiring APSEPs to communicate any base tuition rate and services costs year over year, prior to an LEA's budget cycle, will allow the LEA to plan for said tuition expenses for their students.

### **An Act Concerning Special Education Funding for Charter School Students**

This proposal clarifies that the "reasonable costs" of providing special education services to students who attend charter schools are the actual costs of providing and otherwise implementing the mandated services set forth in the student's individualized education program.

## **Opportunities to: Support Magnet and Open Choice Students**

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### **An Act Extending the Dates for Magnet Enrollment Standards**

This proposal (1) extends the period that the enrollment requirements for interdistrict magnet schools will apply to such schools from an end date of June 30, 2025, to an ongoing requirement for every fiscal year to remain consistent with the settlement agreement in the *Sheff v. O'Neill* case and the Commissioner's Reduced Isolation Enrollment Standards, as established by the Commissioner of Education pursuant to C.G.S. §10-264r; and (2) continues the date for applying a fiscal penalty on interdistrict magnet schools for noncompliance with enrollment standards to every fiscal year. These are technical adjustments that are usually made each biennium, however this proposed amendment simplifies the process by continuing the standards to every fiscal year.

### **An Act Concerning Confidential School Choice Lottery Algorithms and Protocols**

This proposal designates that the Greater Hartford Region School Choice lottery algorithm and placement protocols administered by the Regional School Choice Office (RSCO) are not considered public records under the Connecticut Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and, therefore, not subject to disclosure. This proposal protects confidential lottery and protocol information that may be used to manipulate or circumvent the lottery protocols for advantage in lottery placements.

### **An Act Authorizing Capital Improvement Grants for Goodwin University Magnet Schools Education Services**

This proposal amends PA 23-205 Section 13(f) and 32(e) to specifically name Goodwin University Educational Services (GUES) to the list of interdistrict magnet school operators which may receive capital improvement funds through a grant-in-aid from the sale of bonds for interdistrict magnet schools. Currently, the legislation limits access to capital improvement grant funds to Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs), as non-taxing authorities. GUES, like RESCs, is not a taxing authority and requires access to capital funds for capital improvements to interdistrict magnet schools. PA 23-205 Section 13(f)(2) authorizes \$8.5M in grants-in-aid for capital improvements and Section 32(e)(2) authorizes \$12.5M.

### **Revision to Magnet Transportation Grants to Entities Which Assist the State in Meeting Its Obligation Pursuant to *Sheff v. O'Neill***

This proposal revises transportation grants in the Sheff Region to authorize grants based on actual costs of transportation by entities which assist the state in meeting its obligation pursuant to the decision in *Sheff v. O'Neill*, or any related stipulation or order in effect, for transportation to interdistrict magnet schools and eliminates language limiting payment of transportation grants to any eligible entity to available appropriations. The proposal amends subsection (a) (3) and (a)(4) to Section 10-264i of the Connecticut General Statutes to eliminate the \$2,000 per pupil and supplemental grant structure and instead authorizes payment for the actual cost of reasonable transportation services to interdistrict magnet schools by entities which assist the state in meeting its obligation pursuant to the *Sheff v. O'Neill* decision, beginning in fiscal year 2025. Authorizing payment of actual transportation costs, without limiting such payments to the appropriation, meets the commitment in the stipulation and order in the *Sheff v. O'Neill* case and the obligations to transportation service providers through contracts with the administrator of the transportation program in the Sheff Region. Subdivision (4) of subsection (a) continues payment of the grant at 95% in the current fiscal year with the remaining 5% in the next fiscal year, subject to a comprehensive audit, but (1) changes the date from September to November for payment of the remaining balance to reflect the actual timeline for the audit process, and (2) requires that half of the grant to be paid in the current fiscal year be paid in October to support payment to transportation service providers through the school year.

## **Opportunities to: Support our Educators**

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### **An Act Concerning Removal of the Mandated Survey on Reading Instruction**

This legislative proposal seeks to remove the mandate that certified kindergarten to three (K-3) educators holding an initial, provisional, or professional educator certificate with an early childhood Nursery through 3 or an elementary endorsement take a survey on reading instruction. Only 17.6 percent of elementary teachers are now eligible to take the Reading Survey as they graduated prior to the requirement that they pass the Reading Test for certification. Furthermore, administering and preparing for the Reading Survey diverts valuable time and resources away from teaching and professional growth and development.

### **An Act Concerning Revisions to the Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) Program and Educator Certification Process**

This proposal would align statute with upcoming certification changes by eliminating references to the provisional educator certificate from TEAM legislation. With the phase-out of this certificate set for July 1, 2025, updating the language will streamline the certification process and eliminate any confusion regarding TEAM completion as a requirement to advance certification.

## **Opportunities to: Sustain Successful Initiatives**

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### **An Act Concerning the Establishment of the Connecticut State Seal of Civics Education and Engagement**

The purpose of this proposal is to recognize and promote civic education and engagement among high school students in Connecticut by establishing the Connecticut State Seal of Civics Education and Engagement.

This proposed legislation would enable the State Department of Education to establish the criteria for a State Seal of Civics Education and Engagement, which would enable any diploma-issuing entity to affix the State Seal of Civics Education and Engagement on a diploma awarded to a student who has met civic proficiency.

## Opportunities for: Achieving Efficiencies

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### **An Act Concerning Alignment of the Charter School Request for Proposal (RFP) Process with the Governor’s Biennial Budget**

Current law requires the CSDE to issue a yearly request for proposals for new charter schools. This proposal would move that requirement to every 2 years to align the charter school approval process with the Governor’s Biennial Budget process and streamline the work of the CSDE.



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