

State Of Connecticut

Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS)

Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB)

State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) to BESB

DRAFT MINUTES

July 16, 2025

Members Present:

Melissa Thompson- Treasurer, Enaida Mendoza, Carol Jenkins-BESB Director, Shellyann McDermott, Phillip Magalnick- Chairman, William DeMaio- Vice Chairman, Lucretia Jones- Secretary, Contessa Big Crow-Jenkins, Shannon Gale, Joseph Carbone, John Carnemolla, Jim McCollum, Jennifer Jenkins, Deb Reed, Laura Knapp

Others Present:

Ashley Morgan, Mary Burgard, Jennifer Proto, Nicole Rico Serrano

Members Absent:

Nicole Jezairian, Marilyn Wenzel, Brandy Altergott, Bernadette Jackel, Laurianne Florio, Jay Brown

Welcome:

Call to order: Chairman Phillip Magalnick called the meeting to order at 10:05am. After a few late members joining the call, a quorum was present.

Public Comment:

None

Tribal Nation Introduction

Nicole Rico Serrano was introduced by Chairman Phillip Magalnick. She is the program director for the MPTN VR Program. There are four (4) members of her team: Contessa Big Crow- Jenkins, Job Developer and Cultural liaison, Michael Morton, VR Counselor, Tanish Sebastian,

Administrative Assistant, and herself. The MPTN serves all federally and state recognized tribal members in the Connecticut and Rhode Island area with a diagnosed disability, be it physical, mental, cognitive, or learning. She stated that many social services programs have difficulty understanding the unique history of the Native American Communities. They service about ten thousand tribal members. Their organization is smaller and more flexible and responsive to the cultures of all the tribes. They offer similar services like BRS, but they can offer traditional services as well as cultural services such as prayer, smudging, cultural resources, and tribal community connections.

They work with roughly forty (40) consumers at a time with fourteen (14) case closures. These are not large numbers, but they serve a much smaller community, so they have seen those numbers be consistent over the years. They have many people that don't know they exist, trying to get a larger group of tribal members to hear about them and their services is a challenge. They can travel to the consumer when necessary. They work with transitional students ages 14-21 to help make the transition from school to adulthood as smooth and seamless as possible to help set them up for success. Deb Reed asked if they help with students going to college. Nicole Rico Serrano stated that they don't work with as many students as they would like but it is mostly high school age students getting ready to graduate and wanting to go to college or vocational schools.

They send out consumer satisfaction surveys, not many get completed unfortunately. They do get the majority of their referrals from other tribal members that let friends and family know about them.

Chairman Phillip Magalnick thanked her for coming and showing a different side to VR from BESB. He applauded their efforts with working with members on small business endeavors. He asked what their blind members consisted of; she stated they do not track the actual individual disabilities just that they have a diagnosed disability. Their funds are provided by the Bureau of Indian Affairs grants. She mentioned they have a board and are always looking for more

members, Chairman Phillip Magalnick stated he would be reaching out to her regarding this. They have several offices across Connecticut and Rhode Island. They would love more involvement from BESB and referrals from BESB and BRS would be appreciated.

Unfinished Business:

Approval of March 2025 Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the March meeting minutes was made by William DeMaio, seconded by Deb Reed. Motion passed unanimously, none opposed and no abstentions.

Treasurer's Report

Melissa Thompson reported that the SRC's budget started at \$10,000.00 for the year. Expenses year to date were \$458.00 for Chairman Phillip Magalnick to attend the NCSRC meeting in Bethesda, Maryland that was cancelled. Chairman Phillip Magalnick corrected that the conference was not cancelled but that he had to cancel attending due to a family emergency. The SRC is also paying for the members to have state email addresses to conduct SRC business with rather than personal email accounts. The BITS department has not sent an invoice for this service yet. Director Carol Jenkins stated that BITS will be covering the cost of the ct.gov email addresses and will not be submitting an invoice. The remaining balance after expenses is \$9,542.00.

Work Group Reports

Membership Work Group

Lucretia Jones stated that the membership group has come up with a final meeting time to review and create a procedure for SRC new members onboarding and training for existing members. They have reviewed extensive videos and training materials as well as the PowerPoint from BRS's SRC training and are finalizing which items to use to draft a new member training procedure. Once this is finalized it will be rolled out to members. Director Carol Jenkins went over all the members current terms and when those terms will be expiring as several will be ending their second term soon.

Satisfaction Survey Work Group

Director Carol Jenkins stated that the work group has gone over these questions extensively and have redone most of them for the new survey based on gaps identified in previous surveys. They have worked with Diana Cohen from CCSU with the creation of the new online survey. Shellyann McDermott asked when this survey would be sent out to consumers, Director Carol Jenkins stated in September. William DeMaio made a motion to accept the survey as presented by the work group and authorized for distribution by Director Carol Jenkins, seconded by Lucretia Jones. Passed unanimously with none opposed and no abstentions.

VR Manual Work Group

Director Carol Jenkins stated that this is the policy manual for VR staff to follow when providing services for clients. She clarified that this is not a client handbook or anything of that nature. The manual is in place to guide staff with services we provide and government rules and regulations that we must abide by. The next steps for this are as follows:

- 1- Legal review to make sure nothing is violating said rules and regulations
- 2- Posted for public comment and public meeting
- 3- SRC review of all comments and make changes as needed
- 4- Work group authorizes implementation of manual

Shellyann McDermott made a motion to send the manual to legal for review and to proceed with the process stated to implement the manual. This was seconded by Melissa Thompson, passed unanimously, none opposed and no abstentions.

Events and Synergy Report Group

Melissa Thompson stated that the events work group was looking into finding a location to hold an SRC retreat for members to meet in person. Chairman Phillip Magalnick stated that this would likely be a weekend event so it didn't interfere with members work schedules and independent of the quarterly meetings so that members could meet in person, do some training and learn more about the SRC. He

stated it may be too late to get something organized by September/October but maybe the spring would work as well. This is something they are still working on and will email more information once some things are finalized.

The Synergy Report work group stated at this time there was not much to discuss about this. They need another meeting at this time to really get into the matters they would like to have addressed and try to get changed. More to come later.

SRC Email addresses and Telephone Number

Chairman Phillip Magalnick stated that everyone that requested a state email address for SRC matters should have received the information and set them up accordingly at this time. A phone line for SRC calls for the public has also been established with certain council members having access to it.

New Business:

Director's Report

Please refer to Appendix A for the full report from Director Carol Jenkins and Appendix B for the full Budget Report. Director Carol Jenkins reported that there were a few updates to the staff vacancies since the report went out to members in June. Adult Services new supervisor April Mattoon started in May. Michael Pompano will be taking the new Children's Services Supervisor position in August. Kassidy Morin, a TVI, and Victoria Wallace, and O & M teacher, are new staff that joined BESB. Two (2) new teachers will be added starting in August as well. Shellyann McDermott asked if the VR funding has changed with what is going on with the federal government changes. Director Carol Jenkins reported that the 2025 fiscal year funding is stable, we received an increase from the 2024 fiscal year. She reported that the 2026 budget is proposed to go back to the 2024 level of funding.

VR Supervisor's Report

Please refer to Appendix C for the full report from VR Supervisor Mary Burgard. Mary Burgard reported a few updates since the report went

to members in June. The Bilingual counselor position has been filled; she will be starting on September 5th. Another counselor position has also been filled; she will be starting in August, but Mary Burgard has not received the official acceptance letter at this time. Mary Burgard and Jonathan Richmond attended the CSAVR meeting in April. She reported that there is transitioning happening with RSA as retirements are taking place. Panels were held regarding who is taking on what positions. She reported they also stayed away from mentioning anything happening nationally since everything is still in flux. Jonathan Richmond attended the seminars dealing with client services while she went to the ones geared towards hiring and retention of staff. Jonathan Richmond also attended the first day of the NCSAB conference, she was unable to attend this year.

Legislative Updates

Please refer to Appendix D for the full report from Jennifer Proto ADS Legislative liaison. She reported that several items have been passed and implemented since the report was sent out. She will update these and send them out again. A few were funding for the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing Bureau, they received funding for the director and an administrative assistant. Curbside voting laws have been enacted. Driver training program has moved back to the Department of Motor Vehicles. We received funds for Aging in Place, where funds are available to help the elderly stay in their homes rather than be placed in nursing facilities. Public act 25-124, interpreting standards board was created of a group of volunteers to set education and training process standards for interpreters. Public Act 25-151, annual increase rates, this was pushed out to 2027 for non-profit human resources providers. Special Education bill 25-93 was established for special education funding/endowment. Public Act 25-42 was changed to allow for higher income limits for families with a child that is disabled to receive Medicaid. There is a waiting list for this, that will hopefully be eliminated now, but the age changes from twenty-one (21) to eighteen (18).

Chairman's Report

Chairman Phillip Magalnick stated that a Bylaws work group will be needed as the SRC Bylaws need to be updated. He wanted to apologize for leaving out Enaida Mendoza on the VR manual work group as she has been a big help with this as the VR staff member and her perspective. He stated if any questions to please reach out to him. He also mentioned that in September's meeting a new chair, vice-chair, treasurer, and secretary will be needed and voted on. If anyone is interested in any of these positions, please reach out to him.

Adjournment

Chairman Phillip Magalnick asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Melissa Thompson made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Deb Reed. Motion carried unanimously, none opposed, and no abstentions. Meeting was adjourned at 11:47 am.

Appendix A

BESB Updates **June 2025**

A. Staff Vacancies

- a. In VR, Allison Baranauskas, a VR counselor, Chris Goudarzy, a VR Rehabilitation Technology Teacher, and Samantha Jenkins, a VR Processing Technician, were hired at BESB. Interviews for a bi-lingual counselor and one VR counselor position will happen in late June.
- b. In Children's Services, Victoria Wallace, an Orientation and Mobility Teacher, Kassidy Morrin, a TVI, and Mike Pompano, an Education Supervisor, were hired at BESB. Interviews for a teacher position have occurred and the position will be filled. Three more teacher positions are being posted for recruitment.
- c. In Adult Services, April Mattoon has been hired as the Adult Services Supervisor.

B. New Case Management System

- a. BRS, BESB, and BITS are still currently working to obtain a new case management system in which both agencies can afford and maintain for the long-term.

C. VR Workgroups

- a. The BESB Director has been working with SRC workgroups on training materials for new SRC members to ensure understanding of federal regulations and responsibilities, updating the VR policy manual, and re-developing the VR satisfaction survey to better address priorities of information needed.

D. BESB Brochures and Flyers

- a. The VR program has completed brochures, flyers, and videos to educate the public about the VR services we offer. These are very nice and have been very well received. BESB used the same company, Camelo, to create a general BESB flyer to highlight the programs and services offered at BESB. This general BESB flyer will be a good handout for the adult services program to use at health fairs and such to educate the public.

E. BESB Summer Picnic

- a. The BESB summer picnic was held on June 3, 2025, at the patio at Keney Park in Windsor. Several staff attended allowing staff to mingle and get to know the new staff at BESB. It was an afternoon of fun and camaraderie.

F. BESB Refresh

- a. BESB has been getting a refresh by getting staff new office chairs, new monitors, docking stations, and other work items. BESB will also be getting new conference room chairs to accompany the Audio/Visual equipment that was installed several months ago.

Appendix B

BESB Budget Report

June 2025

A. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) FFY 2024

- a. Original VR Grant: \$3,584,073.00
Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Reduction: \$4,206.00
Total VR Grant: \$3,579,867.00

Reallotment: \$80,796.00

Total VR Grant with Reallotment: \$3,660,663.00

VR Remaining Balance: \$1,797,465.87

b. Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

i. Pre-ETS Total 15% Reserve: \$549,099.45

ii. Pre-ETS Remaining Reserve: \$165,781.27

c. Supported Employment (SE)

i. Part A: Adult Remaining balance: \$22,500.00

1. Returning Full Amount

ii. Part B: Youth Remaining balance: \$22,500.00

1. Returning Full Amount

B. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) FFY 2025

a. Original VR Grant: \$4,030,489.00

VR Remaining Balance: \$4,030,489.00

b. Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

i. Pre-ETS Total 15% Reserve: \$604,573.35

ii. Pre-ETS Remaining Reserve: \$604,573.35

c. Supported Employment (SE)

i. Part A: Adult Remaining balance: \$22,500.00

ii. Part B: Youth Remaining balance: \$22,500.00

Appendix C

The VR Program had two new staff start in April. Chris Goudarzy is a Rehabilitation Technologist. He will be covering the Northwest part of the state. He is Bilingual in Spanish and Turkish and will be doing evaluations in those languages as well.

Alie Baranauskas is a new VR Counselor covering the North Central part of the state.

We have interviews for a Bilingual Counselor for Spanish covering the State and a VR Counselor for the Southern part of the state on June 26th.

Conference and Outreach

- 1. VR Counselor Coordinator and VR Supervisor attended the Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation in April. There were panel introductions of the new roles and/or**

new staff at RSA. They had a few retirements. There were breakout sessions on self -employment, streamlining intake process, Champion Businesses and Success stories.

- 2. BESB VR Sponsored the Conference on Individuals with Disabilities that happened 5/30- 10 VR Staff went to a variety of breakout sessions and a keynote speaker from working with individuals with disabilities and dealing with stress and trauma in the workplace for working with clients.**
- 3. Our Transition Coordinator attended the Capacity Building Workshop in Charlotte, NC this brings members together from every state to work out a state plan for their state. CT had representatives from the State Department of Ed, Department of Developmental Services, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services as well as BESB and Parent Advocates.**
- 4. BESB has Sponsored the CT Technology Conference being held June 9 and 10. We have 5 staff attending as well as an outreach table.**
- 5. BESB participated in a collaborative presentation with the Bureau of Aging at ADS to the Senior Centers along with Social Security. This is for collaborative efforts regarding a grant for 55-year-old through the Bureau of Aging to find employment. VR Supervisor spoke about wrap around services we can provide to individuals who are legally blind and over 55.**
- 6. One of VR Counselors participants participated in an extensive Diversity with other State Agency's with a certificate of completion at the end. It was sponsored by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services called Champions for Diversity & Health Equity**
- 7. Our Counselor Coordinator and VR Counselor provided an in-service training at the Village to over 21 Bilingual Staff handing our new outreach materials that are in Spanish and English the providers.**

8. Other presentations and trainings were held at the Presented to Greater New Haven Transit Riders Forum MFETV (March for Education Foundation TV), Southeastern CT Community Center for the Blind, EO Smith High School presenting Spanish materials.

Transition and upcoming Summer Programs

1. Our Transition Coordinator and VR Counselor Coordinator did two in person College Trainings for our transition age students and their parents. One was help at Central CT State University and one was help at Norwalk Community College.
2. There was a series help on Financial Literacy and Self Advocacy for our Transition Age Students put on by Sky's the Limit which is a contracted agency specializing in working with individuals who are blind.
3. There were two different virtual Mentoring Training programs for individuals interested in becoming a Mentor put on by LEAP.
4. There is a in person weeklong camp that is being held at Central CT State University for Cyber Security. Students will learn through an interactive training and will be eligible for a certificate at the end. They will stay in the dorms and have activities in the evening with Skys the Limit. This will be held at the end of June.

Appendix D

2025 ADS Legislative Session Wrap Up

June 12, 2025

BUDGET

PA 25-XX - AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2027, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR, AND PROVISIONS

RELATED TO REVENUE AND OTHER ITEMS IMPLEMENTING THE STATE BUDGET
([HB 7287](#), as amended by House "A" ([LCO 10255](#)))

§ 1 — General Fund Appropriations	FY 26	FY 27
Personal Services	\$ 8,626,272	\$ 8,626,272
Other Expenses	\$ 2,042,575	\$ 2,182,575
Educational Aid for Children - Blind or Visually Impaired	\$ 5,036,360	\$ 5,036,360
Employment Opportunities – Blind & Disabled	\$ 416,974	\$ 416,974
Vocational Rehabilitation - Disabled	\$ 7,895,382	\$ 7,895,382
Supplementary Relief and Services	\$ 97,251	\$ 97,251
Special Training for the Deaf Blind	\$ 264,045	\$ 264,045
Connecticut Radio Information Service	\$ 70,194	\$ 70,194
Independent Living Centers	\$ 1,025,528	\$ 1,025,528
Programs for Senior Citizens	\$ 5,036,165	\$ 5,036,165
Elderly Nutrition	\$ 5,141,074	\$ 5,141,074
Communication Advocacy Network	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000
AGENCY TOTAL	\$ 35,851,820	\$ 35,991,820

§ 5 — Insurance Fund Appropriations	FY 26	FY 27
Fall Prevention	\$ 382,660	\$ 382,660
AGENCY TOTAL	\$ 382,660	\$ 382,660

§ 7 — Workers' Comp. Fund Appropriations	FY 26	FY 27
Personal Services	\$ 634,783	\$ 634,783
Other Expenses	\$ 48,440	\$ 48,440
Rehabilitation Services	\$ 595,631	\$ 595,631
Fringe Benefits	\$ 467,987	\$ 467,987
AGENCY TOTAL	\$ 1,746,841	\$ 1,746,841

§§ 319-320 — Curbside Voting for People with Disabilities

- Under current law, if a voter cannot access their polling place due to a temporary incapacity, the registrar or assistant registrar of voters must take a ballot out to them. After showing any required identification, the voter may mark their ballot and return it to the registrar to be cast.

- The bill eliminates the requirement that the voter's incapacity be temporary to use curbside voting and requires the registrars of voters to designate a specific area for curbside voting to occur
- Bill prohibits any person within a marked radius of 20 feet of an elector voting curbside from
 - soliciting on behalf of, or in opposition to, any candidate or any question on the ballot or
 - loitering, peddling, or offering any advertising matter, ballot, or circular
- Originated as SB 1514

§ 363 — Driver Training Program Transfer

- Transfers the Driver Training Program from ADS-BRS to the DMV, effective July 1, 2025
- Originated as SB 1251 (Governor's Bill)

§ 367 — Income Disregards Under TFA

- Adds an income disregard under the Temporary Family Assistance program for any stipend received in a job training program, including payments from BRS
 - Originated as HB 7104

BONDING

PA 25-XX - AN ACT AUTHORIZING AND ADJUSTING BONDS OF THE STATE AND CONCERNING GRANT PROGRAMS, STATE GRANT COMMITMENTS FOR SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECTS, REVISIONS TO THE SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECTS STATUTES AND VARIOUS PROVISIONS REVISING AND IMPLEMENTING THE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2027 ([HB 7288](#))

§ 13(h) — NEW BOND AUTHORIZATIONS

- Authorizes up to \$5M in new state General Obligation bonds for ADS in FY 26 for grants-in-aid for aging in place

[HB 6932](#) – AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A STATE INTERPRETING STANDARDS BOARD

- Establishes the Interpreting Standards Board to set education, training, and certification requirements for interpreters for people who are Deaf, DeafBlind, or Hard of Hearing

- Board's duties also include establishing the training needed to provide interpreting services to select populations and investigating complaints about interpreters who are not complying with state standards.
- Specifies that the Bureau of Services for Persons Who are Deaf, Deafblind or Hard of Hearing (within ADS) is responsible for certain tasks related to interpreter credentialing and registration, including receiving interpreter registrations
 - Under the bill, interpreters who receive a waiver or acceptable credential equivalent from ADS are exempt from registration and related requirements
- Delays, from January 1 to September 1, the annual reporting deadline for the Advisory Board for Persons who are Deaf, Deafblind, or Hard of Hearing

SB 1358 - AN ACT CONCERNING EQUITABLE COMPENSATION FOR STATE-CONTRACTED NONPROFIT HUMAN SERVICES PROVIDERS

- Requires any state agency contracting with a nonprofit human services provider to annually increase rates beginning July 1, 2027, for recurring contracts by the percentage increase in the CPI in the previous calendar year
- Prohibits agencies from decreasing rates if the CPI decreases

sHB 7107 - AN ACT CONCERNING A JANITORIAL WORK PROGRAM FOR PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY OR DISADVANTAGE AND A TASK FORCE TO STUDY EXPANDING GOVERNMENTAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (as amended by House "A")

- Transfers, from ADS to the DMV, a unit responsible for people with disabilities' driver training and evaluation (§ 8)
- Establishes a task force to study expanding governmental job opportunities for people with disabilities (§ 1)
- Makes changes to CT's Achieving a Better Life (ABLE) program (§§ 2-7)
 - eligibility to open an account to align with federal law
 - allows the state treasurer, who administers the program, to pay admin fees associated with individual accounts; and
 - disregards, to the extent federal law allows, ABLE accounts in all means-tested public assistance programs administered by the state or its political subdivisions, rather than only programs listed in current law
 - Originated as SB 1476

LONG-TERM SERVICES & SUPPORTS

PA 25-16 - AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND DEMENTIA TASK FORCE, REQUIRING HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR BIOMARKER TESTING AND CONCERNING TRANSFERS AND DISCHARGES IN RESIDENTIAL CARE HOMES, TUITION

WAIVERS FOR NURSING HOME RESIDENTS WHO TAKE COURSES AT REGIONAL COMMUNITY-TECHNICAL COLLEGES AND CLOSURES AND EVACUATIONS OF RESIDENTIAL CARE HOMES AND NURSING HOMES (HB 6771)

- Requires all prospective employees of long-term care facilities to undergo, or have had within 3 years, a criminal history and patient abuse background check (§ 1); Originated in HB 6774
- Establishes a 15-member Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Task Force and requires it to develop a state Alzheimer's plan (§ 2); Originated in HB 6912
- Adds to the information that residential care homes must include in the notice to residents before an involuntary transfer or discharge; requires these facilities to consider a resident's closeness to family and known support networks when helping residents find an alternative residence (§3); Originated as HB 6987
- Requires certain individual and group health insurance policies to cover biomarker testing to diagnose, treat, manage, or monitor an insured's disease or condition (§§4 & 5)
- Requires the Community-Technical Colleges to waive tuition fees for residents who, regardless of age, reside in a nursing home for at least 30 days (§ 6 – originated as HB 7006)
- Requires certain LTC facilities to consider closeness to support networks when a resident is being transferred from a facility (§ 7); Originated as HB 6987
- Establishes a working group to examine topics related to residential care homes (§ 8); Originated as HB 6987
- Adds to the circumstances when nursing homes generally must ignore their waiting list when admitting residents who are transferring from another nursing home (§ 9); Originated as HB 6987

PA 25-17 - AN ACT PROHIBITING LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES FROM DISCRIMINATING AGAINST LONG-TERM CARE FACILITY RESIDENTS (HB 6913)

- Prohibits LTC facilities, and their staff, from discriminating against residents based on certain characteristics and status by requiring facilities to:
 - post a printed nondiscrimination notice meeting certain specifications
 - ensure their staff members who work directly with residents receive cultural competency training DPH must develop; and
 - respect residents' physical privacy in the context of certain care, examinations, or treatments
- Requires the LTC Ombudsman to establish policies and procedures for recording related complaints filed by or on behalf of residents

MAJOR LEGISLATION AFFECTING ADS STAKEHOLDERS

PA 25-XX - AN ACT INCREASING RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS, SCHOOLS AND SPECIAL EDUCATION ([SB 1](#), as amended by Senate "A")

- Makes numerous changes to education laws, including:
 - establishing the Early Childhood Education Endowment, funding it with transfers of unappropriated surplus, and requiring the state treasurer to administer it (§§ 1-14 & 43)
 - Adds new requirements to contracts with private special education providers and conditions on expenditures to be eligible for reimbursement (§16)
 - Starting in FY 27, creates a new competitive grant program to support in-district and regional special education programs and services; allows school boards to use funds to, among other things, improve existing in-district programs or create new in-district or regional programs for students currently enrolled with private special education providers (§19)
 - Requires OPM to create, and annually update, a list of certain special education programs throughout the state, to be posted on SDE's public database (§20)
 - Requires RESCs and private special education providers to notify parents or legal guardians, school boards, and SDE about certain special education staffing changes (§22)
 - Requires SDE, in consultation with the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center, to develop a guide to help families understand special education laws and processes (§24)
 - Establishes, and requires SDE to annually administer, the special education training, education, and testing competitive grant program to give grants to educators and paraeducators who commit to working in an alliance district school for 3 years (§25)
 - Establishes the Office of the Educational Ombudsperson to serve students and families from early childhood to adult education (§27)
 - Requires school boards to hire or designate an instructional support partner in every school or school building beginning in the 26-27 school year (§§28 & 29)
 - Requires SDE to conduct a study on the disproportionate or over-identification of minority students for special education services (§30)
 - Requires the education commissioner to make an annual presentation on the progress of SBE's five-year plan, SBE to use these presentations to inform the plan's implementation, and these progress reports to be published online (§31)
 - Requires all superintendents to submit information on the district's contracts, students, staff, and savings annually to the BOE (§32)
 - Expands on SDE's chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan by incorporating additional required and permissible components and requiring SDE to review the plan biannually (§34)
 - Requires local BOEs to create a report on nonlapsing, unspent funds and include similar information in an existing report; similarly updates requirements related to regional BOE educational expenditures reserve funds (§§35-37)

- Requires districts to contact their local homeless education liaisons prior to an expulsion or suspension hearing to determine if the student is homeless (§§38 & 39)

**PA 25-42 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE KATIE BECKETT WORKING GROUP
RECOMMENDATIONS (sHB 7103)**

- BACKGROUND: *The Katie Beckett program is a Medicaid waiver that allows children with severe physical disabilities to be eligible for home- and community-based care*
- Lowers maximum age for Katie Beckett participants from 21 to 18. (At age 18, participants become eligible for different Medicaid coverage.)
- Requires DSS to:
 - develop a 5-year plan to eliminate the program waiting (currently 331 people) and add home modification as a service
 - report by October 1, 2026, to the Appropriations and Human Services committees on recommended state funding needed for the plan
 - annually administer a survey to applicants on the waiting list to confirm or update demographic information and choose whether to remain on the list
 - include information on eligibility criteria and provider reimbursement rates for the waiver program in its Medicaid provider bulletins, and post certain info on DSS website

FAILED LEGISLATION DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY IMPACTING ADS

FAILED: [HB 6865](#) – AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GENERAL GOVERNMENT

- Made various changes to statute, implementing the provisions of the Governor's Recommended Budget (sHB 6864)
 - Included changes to membership of the Governor's Workforce Council (the state's designated workforce board) (§ 9)
 - Amendment ([LCO 10707](#)) passed the House late evening on 6/4
 - Not included in Senate consent calendar
 - Expected to return in next session, if not earlier

FAILED: [HB 7025](#) – AN ACT CONCERNING UPDATING THE STAFFING METHODOLOGY FOR TEACHERS OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED CHILDREN

- Under current law [17a-812\(b\)\(3\)](#), the weighted formula for teacher caseload management assigns 6 points for each student learning braille and 1 point for each non-braille student
- Bill aligned with current practice by requiring consideration of the instruction levels set in the student's IEP or 504 service plan, their geographic location, and other relevant factors
- Human Services Public Hearing on 2/27; not reported out of committee

FAILED: [SB 1158](#) – AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A DEPARTMENT ON AGING

- Favorably reported by Human Services Committee; Fiscal note of \$1.09M
- Tabled by the Senate

FAILED: [HB 6105](#) – AN ACT CONCERNING AN INDEPENDENT BUREAU OF SERVICES FOR PERSONS WHO ARE DEAF, DEAFBLIND OR HARD OF HEARING

- Referred to Human Services Committee
- Public Hearing on 2/20

FAILED: [HB 7106](#) – AN ACT CONCERNING WHEELCHAIR REPAIR REQUIREMENTS

- Required DSS to provide coverage for the medically necessary repair or replacement of a Medicaid recipient's customized wheelchair
- Increased the frequency of reports from authorized wheelchair dealers on repair times and extended requirement to all dealers

- Required OHA to conduct a public awareness campaign, within available appropriations, to inform customers about their rights concerning timely wheelchair repair under state law
- Terminated the Complex Rehabilitation Technology and Wheelchair Repair Advisory Council on February 1, 2026
- Passed by House as amended; Tabled by Senate
 - Could return in future session(s)

FAILED: [HB 5607](#) – AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY ELIMINATING THE SUBMINIMUM WAGE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- Raised bill required people with disabilities to be paid the full minimum fair wage
- Substitute language required a task force to study the issue
- Bill was amended further to revise task force mandate to study “additional services, funding and benefits that may be utilized” to support individuals with disabilities who earn less than minimum wage
 - Passed by House; Tabled by Senate
 - Likely to return in future session(s)

FAILED: [HB 7187](#) – AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF A REPORT ON EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

- Raised bill required OPM to implement certain 2024 report recommendations
- Favorably reported by Human Services Committee
- Fiscal note of ~\$750K
- Referred to Appropriations Committee