



## 2023 Acts Affecting Education

By: John D. Moran, Principal Analyst  
Jessica Callahan, Associate Analyst  
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## Notice to Readers

This report provides summaries of new laws (public acts and special acts) significantly affecting education enacted during the 2023 legislative session. OLR's other Acts Affecting reports, including Acts Affecting Children, are, or will soon be, available on OLR's website:

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Each summary indicates the public act (PA) or special act (SA) number. Not all provisions of the acts are included. Complete summaries of public acts are, or will soon be, available on OLR's website: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/olr/olrsums.asp>.

Readers are encouraged to obtain the full text of acts that interest them from the Connecticut State Library, House Clerk's Office, or General Assembly's website: <http://www.cga.ct.gov>.

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## **Charter Schools**

### ***Charter School Enrollment Criteria***

A new law generally prohibits charter schools from asking about or considering an applicant student's need for or receipt of special education and related services. It also prohibits these schools from considering special education status as part of their enrollment lottery criteria ([PA 23-150](#), § 14, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Charter Schools and Educational Interests of the State***

The legislature passed a new law that explicitly places charter schools under the existing "educational interests of the state" law that includes a complaint process, which already applies to local and regional boards of education. The law allows complaints to be brought to the State Board of Education (SBE) in situations where a resident or a parent alleges the failure or inability of a charter school to implement the educational interests of the state, such as providing every child with the equal opportunity to receive a suitable educational experiences as prescribed in law ([PA 23-160](#), §§ 43 & 44, effective July 1, 2023).

## **Curriculum and Instruction**

### ***Adding Cursive and World Languages to the Model Curriculum***

This past session the legislature revised the kindergarten-to-grade-eight model curriculum that the State Department of Education (SDE) is working on by adding cursive writing and world languages. By law, SDE must develop the curriculum by January 1, 2024. The new law also specifies that school boards may choose to use all or parts of the curriculum ([PA 23-167](#), § 16, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Financial Literacy as a High School Requirement***

A new law adds a half-credit of personal financial management and financial literacy to the high school graduation requirements beginning with the graduating class of 2027 (i.e., students currently enrolled in eighth grade). The law allows the half-credit in financial literacy to count towards either the nine-credit humanities graduation requirement or as an elective credit ([PA 23-21](#), effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Parental Access to Curriculum***

This year the legislature passed a law that aligns state statute with federal requirements by requiring boards of education to make all curriculum approved by their school district curriculum committee, as well as all associated curriculum materials, available to parents and guardians under

the requirements of the federal Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA). PPRA, in part, gives parents and guardians the right to inspect instructional material used by the school district as part of their student’s educational curriculum (excluding academic tests and assessments) ([PA 23-160](#), § 3, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Private School Curriculum Accreditation***

The legislature enacted a law narrowing the requirement that SBE allow a private school’s supervisory agent to accept accreditation from Cognia, a nonprofit accreditation agency; specifically, it applies this requirement only to a nonpublic school in Waterbury rather than statewide. The act also requires the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) commissioner to recognize Cognia accreditation for the same Waterbury school ([PA 23-204](#), § 310, effective upon passage).

### ***Reading Model and Program Implementation***

State law requires each school board to implement one of five SDE-approved reading curriculum models or programs for grades pre-kindergarten to three beginning with the 2023-24 school year. The law also allows a board to seek a waiver from using one of the recommended five if it can show the model it uses is comparable.

The legislature enacted a new law that requires a board that received a waiver to implement its comparable model under the waiver by the 2024-25 school year. The new law also (1) allows school boards without a waiver, but that have not adopted a recommended model, to partially implement a recommended model over time; (2) eliminates a provision that allows the commissioner to grant a school board more time for implementation due to insufficient resources or funding; and (3) repeals the director of reading initiatives position in SDE ([PA 23-167](#), §§ 20-23 & 86, effective upon passage).

### ***Review of Issues Related to Implementing the Reading Model and Program***

The legislature enacted a law that requires SDE’s Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success to review issues related to school boards’ implementation of the required reading curriculum models or programs, including an examination of how SDE has provided technical assistance to boards that were denied a waiver ([PA 23-167](#), § 24, effective upon passage).

### ***SDE Curriculum Coordinator***

The legislature enacted a new law that requires the education commissioner to employ at least one curriculum coordinator to provide curriculum materials and assist local and regional boards of

education to include certain subject areas when developing instructional programs ([PA 23-160](#), § 45, effective July 1, 2023).

## **Early Childhood Education**

### ***Care 4 Kids Eligibility Waiver for At-Risk Groups***

The legislature enacted a law that allows the OEC commissioner to (1) institute a protective service class that waives Care 4 Kids eligibility requirements for certain at-risk populations and (2) instead apply guidelines she prescribes. Specifically, she can institute this class for the following groups: children placed in a foster home by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and for whom the parent or legal guardian receives foster care payments; adopted children for one year after the adoption; and homeless children and youths, as defined in federal law ([PA 23-150](#), § 2, & [PA 23-204](#), § 331, both effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Care 4 Kids Income Level Eligibility***

Under a new law the OEC commissioner must establish a two-tiered income eligibility limit for Care 4 Kids that conforms with federal regulations ([PA 23-160](#), § 41, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Child Care Supports and Subsidies Plan for Parents in Substance Use Disorder Treatment***

A new law requires the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) and Department of Social Services (DSS) to collaborate with OEC to create a plan to allow parents in substance use disorder treatment to qualify for child care supports and subsidies. The DMHAS and DSS commissioners must jointly report on the plan to the Human Services and Public Health committees by January 1, 2024 ([PA 23-97](#), § 30, effective upon passage).

### ***Early Childhood Education Fund***

As part of the budget implementer act, the legislature passed a law requiring the comptroller to establish the Early Childhood Education Fund and charging the OEC commissioner with reporting to legislative committees with recommendations for the fund's expenditures ([PA 23-204](#), §§ 338-339, various effective dates).

### ***Emergency Epinephrine Use at Child Care Facilities***

A new law authorizes an OEC-licensed child care provider to administer epinephrine for emergency first aid to a child experiencing an allergic reaction. The law sets certain requirements and includes

the ability for parents to opt their child out of emergency administration ([PA 23-150](#), § 3, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Increased Business Tax Credit for Child Care Investments***

Starting with the 2024 income year, a new law makes businesses eligible for a 25% corporation business tax credit for certain child care-related investments. It does so in two ways. First, it increases the existing human capital investment tax credit from 5% to 25% for currently eligible child care-related expenses (i.e., subsidies to in-state employees for in-state child care and facility-related expenses paid to establish a child care center for use primarily by in-state employees' children). Second, it expands eligibility for the 25% credit to include donations or capital contributions to 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations for site preparation and planning, constructing, renovating, or acquiring facilities to establish a child care center for use by children living in the community, including in-state employees' children.

The new law also makes it easier for businesses to claim the credits for child care-related expenses by allowing them to reduce up to 70% of their tax liability with the credits each year (currently, a 50.1% cap applies to all corporation tax credits except R&D credits) ([PA 23-204](#), §§ 350 & 351, effective January 1, 2024).

### ***Individualized Family Service Plans and Services Provided in Spanish***

The legislature recently passed a law requiring Birth-to-Three program individualized family service plans to be translated into and provided in Spanish for any family whose primary language is Spanish. Existing law requires eligible children in the program and their families to generally receive within set timeframes a (1) multidisciplinary assessment, (2) written individualized family service plan, and (3) review of the plan.

Additionally, the new law requires an eligible child whose primary language is Spanish to receive early intervention services from Spanish-speaking personnel and a Spanish-speaking service coordinator. Under the act, if there is no such personnel or coordinator available within the system to provide early intervention services, then a Spanish-speaking interpreter must be used to provide these services to the eligible child ([PA 23-101](#), §§ 5 & 6, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Lowering Eligibility Age for School Readiness***

The legislature enacted a new law that lowers the eligibility age of children for the school readiness program. Under prior law, eligible children were ages three or four, and children age five who are not

eligible to enroll in kindergarten. The law lowers the entry age to birth ([PA 23-160](#), §§ 35 & 37, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Parent Advisory Cabinet***

A new law requires OEC to establish a parent advisory cabinet that will advise OEC on ways to, among other things, strengthen the partnership with, and increase access to services for, families ([PA 23-160](#), § 40, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Payment to Birth-to-Three Program Early Intervention Service Providers***

A new law makes permanent the \$200 general administrative payment the OEC commissioner must make to certain Birth-to-Three early intervention service providers. Under prior law, this payment requirement would have sunset on June 30, 2024.

By law and unchanged by the act, the commissioner must make these payments to providers for each child (1) with an individualized family service plan on the first day of the billing month and (2) whose plan accounts for less than nine service hours during the billing month, so long as the provider delivers at least one service during the month ([PA 23-101](#), §§ 3-4, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Play-Based Learning***

A new law requires schools to provide play-based learning during each regular school day for kindergarten and preschool students. It also requires school boards to permit a teacher to use play-based learning during the school day for grades one to five and adds play-based learning to educator professional development. Under the act, “play-based learning” is a pedagogical approach that emphasizes play in promoting learning and includes developmentally appropriate strategies that can be integrated with existing learning standards but does not mean recess time or physical education ([PA 23-159](#), §§ 4 & 5, effective July 1, 2023; [PA 23-101](#), § 20, effective July 1, 2024).

### ***Raising the Kindergarten Entrance Age***

In response to the concern about the varied developmental levels in kindergarten when children ages four, five, and even six are together in the same class, a new law raises the age children can start public school kindergarten from age five by January of the school year to age five by September of the school year. It allows a child under five years old as of September 1 to be admitted to kindergarten if the parent or guardian makes a request to the school principal, and the principal and an appropriate staff person conduct an assessment that shows the child is developmentally ready ([PA 23-159](#), § 3 & [PA 23-208](#), § 1, both effective July 1, 2024).

## Grants and Funding

### *Bond Act Grants*

This year's bond act authorizes bonds to support various education related grants for FYs 24 and 25. The act includes for FY 24:

1. up to \$20 million to the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) for alterations, renovations, and improvements at magnet schools to support additional preschool and elementary slots;
2. up to \$10 million to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection for matching grants needed for boards of education and towns as part of federal grant applications for zero-emission school buses;
3. up to \$5 million to SDE to help local and regional districts with alterations, repairs, improvements, technology, and equipment in low-performing schools;
4. up to \$8.5 million to SDE for regional education service centers (RESCs) for capital expenses at magnet schools; and
5. up to \$5 million to OEC for constructing, improving, or equipping child care centers, including costs associated with architectural, engineering, or demolition services related to the infant and toddler pilot program.

For items 2 through 5, the act includes another round of funding at the same levels for FY 25, except for FY 25 the RESC magnet funds are increased to \$12.5 million.

Additionally, the act increases the bond authorization for (1) charter school capital grants by \$11 million and specifies that \$5 million must be effective July 1, 2024, and (2) school indoor air quality grants by \$300 million and specifies that \$150 million must be effective July 1, 2024 ([PA 23-205](#); §§ 13(b), (c), (f) & (g); 32 (b), (e) & (f); 57 & 58; effective July 1, 2023).

### *Charter School Grant Increases*

The budget act increases the per-student state charter school grant for FYs 24 and 25, with the FY 25 amount ongoing for future years. By law, the grants go to the charter school's governing authority ([PA 23-204](#), § 343, effective July 1, 2023).

### *Distribution of Special Education Excess Cost Grant*

A new law raises the state grant reimbursement for each of the three tiers of towns in the special education excess cost grant and places two other grants related to state agency-placed students under the same tiered method. Additionally, it creates a method for distributing the special

education excess cost grant when the existing tier method is used but results in unexpended appropriations (PA 23-1, §§ 8-10, effective upon passage).

### ***ECS Grant Schedule Changes***

For the biennium, the budget appropriates a \$163.7 million increase in the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant. While the majority of this increase was scheduled, additional funds were provided to ensure that no town receives an ECS decrease in the biennium (i.e., overfunded towns are “held harmless”).

Additionally, the budget act changes the statutory schedule for ECS grant increases. Under the act, towns that the formula currently underfunds are fully funded sooner than under current law, by FY 26 rather than by FY 28 ([PA 23-204](#), § 340, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Excess Cost Grant Increase***

The budget act increases the excess cost grant amount for high cost special education students by \$50 million (\$25 million for each fiscal year) ([PA 23-204](#), § 1, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Grant for Delivery of Student Mental Health Services***

The budget implementer act pushes out by one year the dates during which SDE must administer a grant program (from FYs 23-25 to FYs 24-26) to provide student mental health services to certain youth camp and summer program operators. It also removes the requirement that grant recipients refund unexpended grant amounts to SDE ([PA 23-204](#), § 337, effective upon passage).

### ***Grants to Assist Sheff Programs***

The budget act allows the education commissioner, in order to help the state meet its *Sheff* decision desegregation obligations, to award grants from funds appropriated for the *Sheff* settlement for academic and social student support programs at (1) magnet schools, (2) the Open Choice program, (3) the interdistrict cooperative program, and (4) the state technical education and career high schools. Under unchanged existing law, the commissioner can transfer *Sheff* money for grants for unspecified purposes for the same programs ([PA 23-160](#), § 33 & [PA 23-204](#), § 334, both effective July 1, 2023).

## ***Grants to Hire School Social Workers, Psychologists, Counselors, Nurses, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, and School Mental Health Specialists***

Existing law requires SDE to administer grant programs for local and regional boards of education to (1) hire and retain more school social workers, school psychologists, school counselors, nurses, and licensed marriage and family therapists and (2) hire school mental health specialists. The budget implementer act (and another act) pushes out by one year the fiscal year during which SDE must administer the school mental health specialist grant program (from FYs 23-25 to FYs 24-26). It also removes the requirement that grant recipients in both programs refund unexpended grant amounts to SDE ([PA 23-167](#), §§ 83 & 84; [PA 23-204](#), §§ 335-336; effective upon passage).

## ***High School Pre-Apprenticeship Grant Program***

A new law requires SDE, by January 1, 2024, to establish a pre-apprenticeship grant program for boards of education that include Department of Labor (DOL)-registered pre-apprenticeship programs in their high school curriculum. It also requires SDE, starting by January 1, 2025, to annually report to the Education Committee on the program, including the amount of grants awarded and types of pre-apprenticeship programs students completed during the prior year ([PA 23-167](#), § 31, effective July 1, 2023).

## ***Local Food for Schools Incentive Program***

A new law creates the local food for schools incentive program in the Department of Agriculture (DoAg) to reimburse eligible school boards for the purchase of locally or regionally sourced food for school meal programs. The law requires DoAg to develop grant guidelines and establish reimbursement rates for locally- and regionally-sourced food. It also redirects unexpended CT Grown for CT Kids Grant Program funds to the new program ([PA 23-167](#), §§ 26 & 27, effective July 1, 2023).

## ***Minority Teacher Recruitment Funding***

By law, each alliance district must partner with an operator of a minority teacher residency program to enroll candidates and place them in the district for a 10-month residency. To fund this program, SDE withholds from each alliance district a percentage of its state aid.

In FY 25, a new law requires the education commissioner to withhold 10% of any increase in funds the alliance district received in FY 21 over the amount of funds it received in FY 20. Prior law would have required the department to instead withhold 10% of any increase the district received starting



in FY 23 that exceeds the amount received in FY 20 ([PA 23-167](#), § 41, as amended by [PA 23-208](#), § 5, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Open Choice Funds***

A new law limits the amount of Open Choice program funds that can be used for one earmark and removes the language that prevents any remaining funds from lapsing back to the General Fund at the end of the fiscal year. The law limits the earmark for wraparound services for students in Open Choice to \$2 million a year. Open Choice is a voluntary interdistrict attendance program that allows students from the Hartford, New Haven, and Bridgeport school districts to attend suburban schools, and vice versa, on a space-available basis ([PA 23-167](#), § 19, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Open Choice Grant Funds for Legacy Foundation***

The legislature enacted a new law that requires the education commissioner to expend \$500,000 of remaining Open Choice funds for a grant to The Legacy Foundation for wrap-around services for students participating in the Open Choice program ([PA 23-204](#), § 313, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Open Choice Grants***

By law, Open Choice grants range from \$2,500 to \$8,000 per student, with larger grants for districts that enroll a higher percentage of Open Choice students. A new law adds language requiring every Open Choice per student grant to be “at least” the amount stated in law beginning in FY 25 and each following year. Open Choice is a voluntary interdistrict attendance program that allows students generally from the Hartford, New Haven, and Bridgeport districts to attend suburban school districts, and vice versa, on a space-available basis ([PA 23-204](#), § 345, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Pathways in Technology Early College High School Grant***

The legislature enacted a new law that requires SDE to create a grant for new or expanded pathways in technology early college high school programs in alliance districts. Starting in FY 25, SDE must issue requests for proposals and award grants to two school boards for the costs associated with establishing a new public-private partnership or enhancing a pathway in technology early college high school program ([PA 23-167](#), § 46 & [PA 23-208](#), § 6, both effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Priority School District Funding***

This year’s budget implementer act ties eligibility for certain population-based supplemental priority school district (PSD) grants to FY 22.

Also, existing law requires that districts that no longer qualify as PSDs (i.e., “former PSDs”) receive a progressively reduced PSD grant over the following three years. For FY 24, the act requires that any school district that is in its first year as a “former PSD” receive the same grant amount that it did in FY 23 during its last year as a PSD, rather than a reduced PSD grant ([PA 23-204](#), §§ 323-325, as amended by [PA 23-208](#), § 7, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Requirement to Reduce Education Grants***

In the budget act, the legislature extended through FY 25 the requirement that certain state education grants to boards of education and RESCs be proportionately reduced if the amount appropriated for the grants is insufficient to fully fund them according to their statutory formulas. This applies to health services for private school students, RESC operations, and bilingual education ([PA 23-204](#), §§ 314-317, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***School Meals***

This session the General Assembly increased the state share of funding from \$30 million to \$90 million to extend the free school meals for all students through the end of the 2022-23 school year. This increase was achieved by reallocating \$60 million in unspent federal American Rescue Plan Act funds to SDE ([PA 23-1](#), § 1, effective upon passage).

### ***School Readiness and Child Care Grants***

A new law removes a requirement that any funds exceeding a certain dollar amount stated in statute be used exclusively to increase salaries of early childhood educators. The change affects (1) state-licensed school readiness programs that operate full-day, year-round programs and receive school readiness per-pupil state grants and (2) state-contracted child care facilities ([PA 23-160](#), §§ 36 & 38, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***School Readiness Per Child Cost***

A new law extends the FY 21 cap on the per child cost (i.e., \$9,027) of the OEC school readiness program through FY 24. For FY 25 and subsequent fiscal years, the law increases the cap to \$10,500. The school readiness program provides a developmentally appropriate learning experience for at least 450 hours and 180 days a year for three-, four-, and five-year-olds not eligible to enroll in school ([PA 23-150](#), § 1 & [PA 23-204](#), § 330, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Smart Start Grant Program***

This year’s budget act removes the FY 24 sunset date (i.e., June 30, 2024) for the Smart Start competitive grant, thus making the program permanent. The program provides funds for capital

and operating expenses for school districts to expand or establish preschool programs ([PA 23-160](#), § 39 & [PA 23-204](#), § 332, both effective July 1, 2023).

### ***State Aid for Special Education***

A new law prohibits SDE from including federal pandemic relief funds received by school districts when determining their special education excess cost grant amount. It also revises terminology referenced in state aid calculations in state law for special education ([PA 23-150](#), §§ 9-11, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Supplemental FY 25 Education Spending Amounts***

In a response to numerous needs facing school districts after the pandemic, including recruiting teachers and addressing growing student needs, the biennial budget act provides significant new funding for major education programs for FY 25. It provides the following supplemental amounts for that year:

1. ECS, \$68.5 million;
2. magnet schools, \$53.4 million;
3. state charter schools, \$9.4 million;
4. vocational-agricultural centers, \$7.2 million; and
5. Open Choice program, \$11.4 million ([PA 23-204](#), § 346, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Support for After-School Grant Recipients***

A new law requires SDE to collaborate with RESCs to give after-school grant recipients (and, in some cases, applicants) more specific and targeted forms of support than required under prior law. Among other things, it requires the department to implement risk assessments and ensure programs are aligned with state academic standards ([PA 23-160](#), § 8, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Vo-Ag Center Tuition and Grants***

Beginning in FY 25, the budget act limits vo-ag center tuition for sending towns to 58% of the amount charged in the previous year. Also it requires, in FY 25 and subsequent years, each vo-ag center grant to be “at least” the amount indicated in law, \$5,200 ([PA 23-204](#), § 344, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Wholesome School Meals Pilot Grant Program***

School cafeteria meals have long been thought to need improvement. A new law requires SDE to administer a wholesome school meals pilot program to award five grants to alliance districts to

embed a professional chef in the district to assist school meal programs ([PA 23-167](#), § 6, effective July 1, 2023).

## **Health and Safety**

### ***GPS Use on School Buses***

A new law provides an exception to the distracted driving law for drivers using certain mobile devices for navigation. Existing law generally prohibits school bus drivers from using any mobile electronic device, including with hands-free devices, except in an emergency. But under the new law, school bus drivers may use a mobile electronic device with a video display if it is (1) used as a global positioning system (GPS) or for navigation; (2) securely attached inside the school bus dashboard near the driver; and (3) has been approved by the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) ([PA 23-40](#), § 37, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Medicaid Reimbursement for School-Based Mental Health Assessments***

This session, the legislature passed a law requiring the DSS commissioner, to the extent allowed under federal law, to provide Medicaid reimbursement for suicide risk assessments and other mental health evaluations and services provided at a school-based health center or public school.

The law also requires the commissioner to (1) amend the Medicaid state plan if necessary to provide the reimbursement and (2) set the reimbursement at a level that ensures an adequate pool of providers to provide the assessments, evaluations, and services ([PA 23-101](#), § 9, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Opioid Antagonist Bulk Purchase Fund***

A new law creates an Opioid Antagonist Bulk Purchase Fund as a separate, nonlapsing General Fund account. Starting by January 1, 2024, DMHAS, in collaboration with the Department of Public Health (DPH), must use the account's funds to provide opioid antagonists to eligible entities (such as municipalities, boards of education, and similar bodies governing private schools) and for emergency medical services (EMS) personnel to provide this medication to members of the public ([PA 23-97](#), § 5, effective October 1, 2023).

### ***Optimal School Temperature Range***

A new law requires DPH to develop temperature comfort range guidelines for school buildings by July 1, 2024. Under the law, the optimal comfort range is 65 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit in school

buildings and facilities, but it allows gymnasiums and natatoriums to have a larger range ([PA 23-167](#), § 45, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Restorative Practices Response Policy***

A new law requires each local and regional board of education, beginning with the 2025-26 school year, to adopt a restorative practices response policy to be implemented by school employees for incidents of challenging behavior or nonviolent student conflict that does not constitute a crime. The act prohibits the policy from including the involvement of a school resource officer (SRO) or other law enforcement official unless the challenging behavior or conflict escalates to violence or constitutes a crime ([PA 23-167](#), § 74, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***School Bus Driver Road Tests***

A new law requires DMV to prioritize scheduling road tests for people seeking or renewing a public passenger endorsement (PPE) to drive a school bus ([PA 23-40](#), § 38, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***School Bus Driver Shortage Study***

A new law requires the DMV commissioner to study and make recommendations on policies or initiatives to respond to the nationwide school bus driver shortage. The study must consider, at a minimum, increasing commercial driver's license validity from four to five years and streamlining the licensing and renewal processes for a PPE to operate a school bus. By February 1, 2024, the commissioner must submit the study's results and recommendations to the Transportation Committee ([PA 23-40](#), § 39, effective upon passage).

### ***School Indoor Air Quality Program***

Responding to the initial recommendations of the School Indoor Air Quality Working Group, the legislature enacted a law that requires school districts to conduct more frequent indoor air quality inspections and requires the inspection reports to be submitted to DAS to post on its website. Beginning January 1, 2024, the inspections must be done every year, rather than every three years ([PA 23-167](#), §§ 43 & 44, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***School Resource Officers (SROs)***

A new law requires the memorandum of understanding (MOU) between a school board that assigns an SRO to its schools and the SRO's local law enforcement agency to specify the SRO's duties and procedures for restraining students, using firearms, making school-based arrests, and reporting on investigations and behavioral interventions. The law also requires school boards to post the MOUs on their website and in the SRO's assigned school, as well as maintain the MOU in a central

location in the school district. Additionally, it requires each SRO to submit a report for each investigation or behavioral intervention the SRO conducts within five days of doing so ([PA 23-167](#), §§ 72 & 73, effective July 1, 2023).

Another new law amends [PA 23-167](#), §§ 72 & 73, to specify that an SRO must specifically report on investigations and behavioral interventions only of challenging behavior or conflict that escalates to violence or constitutes a crime, and that an SRO's duties and procedures must be in accordance with any laws or policies about police officer duties. The duties and procedures are those for restraining students, using firearms, conducting school-based arrests, and reporting any investigations and behavioral interventions of challenging behavior or conflict that escalate to violence or constitute a crime ([PA 23-208](#), §§ 9 & 10, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Services for At-Risk Teenage Students***

A new law requires SDE, for FY 24, to award a grant to, and collaborate with, a nonprofit organization specializing in identifying and providing services to certain at-risk teenage students. The act allows SDE, within available appropriations, to hire one full-time employee to implement the law's provisions ([PA 23-101](#), § 17, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Student Lead Poisoning Medical Risk Assessments***

A new law requires all children, before enrolling in public school, to have a lead poisoning medical risk assessment and, if the assessment indicates risk, a test of their blood lead levels. The assessment must be conducted as part of the child's school health assessment required under existing law. Prior law required a child's blood lead levels to be tested as part of the school health assessment only if (1) the local or regional school board determined it was necessary after consulting with the school medical advisor and the local health department and (2) a physician, physician assistant (PA), or advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) ordered the test.

By law, the school health assessment must be completed by a licensed physician, APRN, PA, or school medical advisor in the presence of the child's parent or guardian or a school employee ([PA 23-31](#), § 39, October 1, 2023).

### ***Vision Zero Distinction for Schools***

A new law requires the Department of Transportation (DOT), in consultation with SBE and DMV, to award an exemplary "Vision Zero" program distinction to local and regional boards of education offering programs that give students in grades six to 12 opportunities to learn about the importance of practicing safe driving habits, pedestrian safety skills, and the Vision Zero Council's mission. DOT must award this distinction upon a school board's request, which a board may submit by providing

DOT with details about its program at a time and in the way DOT prescribes. DOT must also make information about the distinction available on its website ([PA 23-116](#), § 3, effective upon passage).

## **Magnet Schools**

### ***Limit on Magnet School Tuition***

Beginning in FY 25, this session's budget act limits magnet school tuition to 58% of the amount charged in the previous year and requires that each magnet school grant be "at least" the amount indicated in law. The same act extends through FY 25 the ban on SDE awarding magnet school grants to schools that do not meet residency and reduced isolation enrollment requirements. Additionally, it renews for FY 24 reduced magnet school tuition payments for certain towns ([PA 23-204](#), §§ 341 & 342, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Magnet School Enrollment Requirements***

Through a new law, the legislature made permanent the requirements that a magnet school's total enrollment (1) have no more than 75% of students from one school district and (2) meet the reduced isolation setting (i.e., desegregation) standards developed by the education commissioner. These requirements were set to expire after the 2023-24 school year. It also extends the law barring the commissioner from awarding grants to magnet schools that do not comply with these enrollment standards. This ban was set to expire after the 2022-23 school year, and the new law extends it to the 2024-25 school year ([PA 23-160](#), §§ 29 & 32, and [PA 23-204](#), § 333, both effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Reinstating Ban on Magnet School Tuition***

A new law reinstates for FY 23 the prohibition on *Sheff* K-12 magnet schools operated by local or regional boards of education charging tuition to school districts sending students to the magnets. The ban expired after the 2018-19 school year (although in practice, none of these schools had begun charging tuition). *Sheff* magnet schools are schools operating under the *Sheff v. O'Neill* state Supreme Court decision and related orders ([PA 23-160](#), § 31, effective July 1, 2023).

## **School Climate**

### ***School Climate Improvement Plan***

As part of revising the state's existing anti-bullying law, the legislature passed a law requiring each school's school climate specialist, in collaboration with the district's school climate coordinator, to develop a school climate improvement plan and update it as needed ([PA 23-167](#), §§ 54 & 71).

## ***School Climate Standards and Model Policy***

A new law requires the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative to (1) develop school climate standards based on national guidelines and best practices and (2) create a uniform bullying complaint form. The act also requires the collaborative to create a uniform bullying complaint form for SDE and local and boards of education to include on their websites and student handbooks.

The act also allows local and regional boards of education, over the next two school years (2023-24 and 2024-25) to adopt and implement the new Connecticut school climate policy. The act requires, by the 2025-26 school year, all boards of education to adopt and implement the Connecticut school climate policy ([PA 23-167](#), §§ 47-49 & 70, effective July 1, 2023).

## ***School Climate Survey***

A new law requires the school climate committee in each public school to biennially administer a school climate survey beginning in the 2025-26 school year to students, school employees, and families of students, so long as students' parents or guardians receive prior written notice about the survey's administration and its content. The act requires the survey to be research-based, validated, and developmentally appropriate and to be administered in the predominant languages of the school community. The survey, which replaces a similar survey in prior law, must measure and identify school climate needs and track progress through a school climate improvement plan ([PA 23-167](#), § 53, effective July 1, 2023).

## ***School Climate Training Resources***

This session, the legislature passed a law requiring each local and regional board of education, beginning in the 2024-25 school year, to provide training and resources to school employees on (1) school climate and culture; (2) social and emotional learning; and (3) evidence-and research-based interventions, including restorative practices. The act allows the resources and training to be made available at each school under the board's jurisdiction and to include technical assistance for implementing the school climate improvement plan ([PA 23-167](#), § 55, effective July 1, 2023).

## ***Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative***

This session, the legislature passed a law requiring the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative to include in its annual report to the Children's and Education committees recommendations about ways to promote the social and emotional development of young children. The 33-member collaborative is tasked with, among other things, (1) collecting



information on school climate improvement efforts of school boards and (2) identifying best practices to promote positive school climates ([PA 23-101](#), § 23, effective July 1, 2023).

## **School Construction**

### ***Federal Funding for School Building Projects***

The budget implementer act eliminates the requirement that the amount of federal funds received by a town must be subtracted from the school building project costs before calculating the state reimbursement grant. The act also allows any town to use federal funds to finance its local share of a school building project ([PA 23-205](#), §§ 117 & 118, various effective dates).

### ***Federal Funding for School HVAC Projects***

Existing law requires DAS to administer a state grant program for the installation, replacement, or upgrade of heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems to improve indoor air quality in schools. The budget implementer act allows local and regional boards of education and RESCs to use any federal funds they receive to finance all or part of their local share for the project ([PA 23-205](#), § 119, effective upon passage).

### ***HVAC and Outdoor Athletic Facility Minimum Reimbursement Rates for Certain Towns***

A new law creates minimum reimbursement rates for HVAC and outdoor athletic facility school construction projects for towns with a population of 80,000 or more (Bridgeport, Danbury, Hartford, New Haven, Norwalk, Stamford, and Waterbury, according to 2021 DPH estimates) and the town of Cheshire. These rates apply regardless of application date ([PA 23-204](#), §§ 328-329, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC) Concerning Education***

The legislature enacted a series of changes in the education statutes governing suspension and expulsion. Specifically, the new laws require the following:

1. school districts with high rates of in-and out-of-school suspension and expulsion to (a) develop strategies to reduce suspensions and expulsions and (b) submit these strategies to SDE;
2. SDE to report to the JJPOC on expulsions and related alternative education program placements; and

3. SDE to provide, and allow school boards to use, recommended assessments for screening students who exhibit mental health distress or who have been identified as at risk for suicide ([PA 23-167](#), §§ 76-82, various effective dates).

### ***School Building Project Reimbursement Rate for “Inclusive Municipalities”***

Under a new law, local or regional boards of education located in an “inclusive municipality,” as determined by the Department of Housing commissioner, are eligible for a five percentage point increase to their state grant reimbursement rate for school building projects. To qualify as an inclusive municipality, a municipality must meet specified requirements, including having (1) a population greater than 6,000; (2) a share of affordable housing units that is less than 10% of its total housing; (3) certain zoning regulations; and (4) constructed deed-restricted affordable housing units equal to at least 1% of the municipality’s total housing units in the three years before the municipality’s application ([PA 23-207](#), § 42, effective October 1, 2023).

### ***School Building Projects Advisory Council***

This year’s budget implementer act increases the School Building Project Advisory Council’s size from nine members to 11 by adding the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) commissioner and the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System’s board chairperson, or their designees ([PA 23-205](#), § 115, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***School Construction Grant Commitments***

As it does every year, the legislature passed a law approving school construction grant commitments. The law authorizes 22 school construction state grant commitments totaling \$736.4 million toward total estimated project costs of \$1.2 billion. It also reauthorizes two new construction projects with a change in scope and cost that results in an additional state grant commitment of \$37.6 million ([PA 23-205](#), § 114, effective upon passage).

### ***School Construction Project Waivers and Modifications***

The budget implementer act exempts school construction projects in 14 towns from certain statutory and regulatory requirements to allow them to, among other things, qualify for state reimbursement grants; receive higher reimbursement percentages for these grants; or waive ineligible costs detected as audit deficiencies. It also repeals a prior project authorization ([PA 23-205](#), §§ 120-139 & 194, effective upon passage).

## ***State School Construction Reimbursement Grant Rate***

Under prior law, for school construction reimbursement grant applications made on and after June 1, 2022, the state reimbursement rate for new school construction projects ranged from 10-70%. However, if the applicant district showed that new construction would be less expensive than a renovation, extension, or major alteration, then the range increased to 20-80%. This year's bond act increases the reimbursement percentage range for all new construction, with no additional conditions, to 10-80% for all grant applications made on and after that same date ([PA 23-205](#), § 116, effective July 1, 2023).

## **School Districts and Boards of Education**

### ***Board of Education Public Notice***

A new law requires boards of education conducting a board meeting to make the agency or any associated documents that members may review at the meeting available for public inspection and post them on the board's website. These requirements appear to be in addition to those of the Freedom of Information Act ([PA 23-160](#), § 6, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Credit Recovery Programs and High School Credit***

The legislature enacted a new law that allows local and regional school boards to award high school graduation credit for completing an education commissioner-approved credit recovery program ([PA 23-167](#), § 17, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Menstrual Products in School Restrooms***

This year the legislature extended the deadline by which boards of education must begin providing free menstrual products in restrooms by one year, from September 1, 2023, to September 1, 2024. Prior law required boards to make these products accessible to grades three to 12 students in women's restrooms, all-gender restrooms, and at least one men's restroom by that date ([PA 23-160](#), § 10, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***New Board of Education Member Required Training***

A new law requires SDE to provide, and newly elected school board members to take, training on the responsibilities and obligations of being a school board member. The law requires SDE to begin offering the annual training by July 1, 2023, and first-time elected school board members must complete the training within one year after assuming office ([PA 23-167](#), §§ 2 & 3, effective July 1, 2023).

## ***Public Hearings for Regional School District Audits***

A new law requires that regional boards of education hold public hearings to discuss annual municipal financial audits involving school districts that (1) were not in compliance with state law or (2) show evidence of unsound or irregular financial practices or lack of internal controls. During the hearing, the board must discuss the audit’s findings and potential causes of the discrepancies identified. Additionally, the law requires the board to consider what was discussed at the meeting when preparing the corrective action plan in response to the audit ([PA 23-197](#), § 2, effective October 1, 2023).

## ***Public School Operator and Health Care Benefit Agreements***

Under a new law, the legislature expanded the types of public school operators that can join in health care benefit agreements with other school operators or municipalities. Prior law allowed a school board or a municipality to join with other school boards or municipalities through a written agreement to form a single entity to provide medical or health care benefits for their employees.

The new law expands the types of entities that can participate by allowing “public school operators,” which are defined as a local or regional board of education, a RESC, the governing council of a state or local charter school, or a magnet school program operator, as described in law ([PA 23-160](#), § 42, effective July 1, 2023).

## ***Regional School District 20 Board Member Elections***

A new law revises the elections for, and terms of, the regional board of education members for Regional School District 20. Under the law, each member town elects one member in 2024, each elects another in 2025, and each elects a third in 2026. All members serve four-year terms ([PA 23-208](#), § 8, effective upon passage).

## **Special Education**

### ***Administrative Hearings for Special Education Disputes***

New legislation makes various changes in the special education administrative hearing laws. Specifically, it modifies the order in which the parties must testify, requiring that the party responsible for providing special education to the student testify before any other party does. It also requires that the hearing officers’ decisions be “promptly indexed and published.” Lastly, it allows any one party to request that the mediation services coordinator appoint a mediator but does not require this request to be written or signed as under prior law ([PA 23-137](#), § 47, effective July 1, 2023).

## ***Age for Special Education Eligibility***

This year the legislature passed a law that aligns the state's special education statutes to a federal court ruling requiring boards of education to provide special education until (1) an eligible student graduates high school or (2) the end of the school year when the eligible student reaches age 22 ([PA 23-137](#), §§ 32-37, effective July 1, 2023).

## ***Conservatorship and Guardianship Resources***

A new law requires local and regional school boards to give information about decision-making supports, including the process for establishing guardianship, conservatorship, or other decision-making alternatives, at the first planning and placement team (PPT) meeting when a student reaches age 14 and then annually. Students, parents, guardians, or surrogate parents of students eligible for special education must receive this information.

Additionally, SDE must develop a plain language, online resource with information and resources about decision-making options once the student reaches age 18. The department must consult with Connecticut disability rights advocacy groups to develop the resource by July 1, 2024 ([PA 23-137](#), §§ 39 & 41, effective July 1, 2023).

## ***Coordination of Transition Services***

This year, the legislature passed a law addressing transition services for students who receive (1) special education and related services in public school and then graduate or age out of the system and (2) early intervention services under the state's Birth-to-Three program and then transition into public schools.

On a statewide level, the act requires SDE to employ a transition services coordinator for state agency-provided services. It also requires agencies that must have a MOU by law with SDE to provide education, health care, and transition services to each do the following: (1) appoint a liaison to the department's statewide coordinator and (2) update the MOUs at least every five years to account for current programs, services, and best practices. Additionally, it requires the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) to employ enough staff, within available appropriations, to provide these services. Also, beginning by July 1, 2024, SDE must annually report to the applicable state agencies the number of students statewide who (1) received transition services information as part of a PPT meeting or (2) may qualify for services ([PA 23-137](#), §§ 26, 28 & 42-44, effective July 1, 2023).

On a local level, the act requires each (1) board of education to appoint a districtwide transition services coordinator and (2) PPT to coordinate these services at two points in an eligible student's high school career ([PA 23-137](#), §§ 31 & 40, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***In-Service Training for School Personnel***

A new law requires school boards to add the following topics to their required in-service training for licensed teachers, administrators, and pupil personnel: (1) laws governing PPT meeting implementation and 504 plans and (2) an annual update of new state and federal policies about special education, recommendations, and best practices ([PA 23-137](#), § 49, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Interpreters and Translated Documents at PPT Meetings***

This session the legislature passed a law that aligns state statutes with federal requirements requiring interpreters at PPT meetings and translated individualized education plan (IEP) documents to ensure student, parent, and guardian understanding. Under this new law, local and regional boards of education must provide these interpreters and translated documents upon request. This includes registered interpreters for persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind. Language interpreters may appear in person or be available by phone or through an SBE-approved online platform or application ([PA 23-137](#), § 39, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Mediation Services for Special Education Disputes***

This session the legislature enacted a law requiring SDE to expand its mediation services. The department offers these services in place of boards of education and families proceeding directly to an administrative hearing to resolve special education disputes. The new law requires SDE to employ a mediation services coordinator to coordinate and oversee mediation services and approved mediators. It also establishes training and continuing education requirements for mediators.

Additionally, the act requires the state's mediation services coordinator to create (1) an online resource explaining the mediation process and (2) a notice of available mediation services. Boards of education must provide this notice to students, parents, guardians, and surrogate parents in writing at the beginning of the school year, and it must be read aloud at the end of the first PPT meeting of each school year.

Lastly, the act allows parties to request mediation services from the state coordinator and requires the coordinator to notify relevant parties and provide any necessary language translation services ([PA 23-137](#), §§ 45-46, effective July 1, 2023).

## ***Online Listing of Transition Services***

A new law requires the State Education Resource Center (SERC) to develop and maintain an online listing that describes in plain language the transition resources, services, and programs that state agencies provide. The listing must also include the eligibility requirements and application deadlines for each one. Beginning in the 2024-25 school year, SDE's statewide transition services coordinator must post a link to this listing on SDE's website and notify each board of education about it. Boards must annually distribute this notice to students and families at PPT meetings for students in grades six to 12 ([PA 23-137](#), § 29, effective January 1, 2024).

## ***School Employees and 504 Plans***

Students with mental or physical disabilities who receive school accommodations under the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 have them memorialized in a written plan, commonly known as a "504 plan." This year, the legislature enacted a law prohibiting boards of education from disciplining any employee who discusses or makes recommendations about student services or accommodations during a 504 plan meeting ([PA 23-150](#), § 16, effective July 1, 2023).

## ***Special Education and 504 Plan Information for Students and Parents***

This session the legislature passed a law requiring SDE to develop an informational handout for students explaining IEPs, 504 plans, and associated student rights in the classroom. Boards of education must give eligible students and their parents information about their rights, resources, and advocacy groups (1) immediately when the student is formally identified as requiring special education, and at each subsequent PPT meeting, and (2) at the beginning of each school year ([PA 23-137](#), §§ 51 & 52, effective July 1, 2023).

## ***Special Education Complaints Filed With the State***

A new law requires SDE to post online summaries of (1) special education complaints filed with the department and (2) corrective actions required by the department. Before posting these decisions and documents online, SDE must redact any personally identifiable student information ([PA 23-150](#), § 15, effective July 1, 2023).

## ***Statewide Special Education Oversight Program***

A new law requires SDE to randomly audit school districts' implementation of federal special education law. The audits must at least include (1) interviews of teachers, staff, parents, and guardians; (2) unannounced observational visits to classrooms and administrators; and (3) a review of students' IEPs ([PA 23-137](#), § 48, effective July 1, 2023).

## ***Transition From Early Intervention to Public School***

A new law requires individual service coordinators for children receiving early intervention services (i.e., Birth-to-Three program participants) to help facilitate the children's transition to public school special education services. Within three months before an eligible child's third birthday, the child's individual service coordinator must (1) notify the child's parent or guardian so that they may meet to discuss the contact information for the person who administers or coordinates special education services for the child's public school district and (2) give the child's individualized family service plan to the public school district's special education coordinator ([PA 23-137](#), § 50, effective July 1, 2023).

## ***Transition Services Training Programs***

A new law requires SDE to create two training programs specific to transition services by July 1, 2024. For the first program, SDE's Bureau of Special Education must develop and annually update an on-demand, online training program on special education and transition services' legal requirements and best practices. For the second program, SDE must work with DDS, ADS, and RESCs to develop a training program for educators, school paraprofessionals, and district transition coordinators on public transition programs. RESCs must provide this program at no cost to attendees ([PA 23-137](#), §§ 27 & 30-31, various effective dates).

## **State Department of Education & State Board of Education**

### ***Assistance for High Poverty-Low Opportunity Census Tracts***

This year's bond act requires the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) commissioner to establish a grant program to fund eligible projects in "high poverty-low opportunity census tracts" and authorizes bonds to fund it. Under the act, these are census tracts in which at least 30% of the residents have incomes below the federal poverty level, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's most recent five-year American Community Survey.

Separate from this program, the act requires SDE, within available appropriations for FYs 24-25, to direct resources and support to school districts that have at least one high poverty-low opportunity census tract within their boundaries ([PA 23-205](#), §§ 101-104, most provisions effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Family and Community Engagement in Education Council***

The legislature passed a new law requiring the education commissioner to convene a council for family and community engagement in education. The council must meet at least quarterly to provide the commissioner with feedback on SDE products and initiatives and SBE's five-year plan,



among other things. The commissioner chooses the council's members, which much consist of school and district staff, parents and guardians, and community members. The council must annually report to SBE and the Education Committee beginning by January 1, 2025 ([PA 23-160](#), § 7, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Publishing Alliance District Plans***

A new law requires SDE to publish on its website the improvement plan each alliance district must submit with its application for the alliance portion of its ECS grant. By law, alliance districts must spend their alliance funds according to the plan submitted with the application and for other specified things ([PA 23-167](#), § 5, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Publishing School District Receipts and Expenditures***

In an effort to make school district finances and spending more transparent, the legislature gave SDE a new responsibility regarding local receipt and expenditure data. A new law requires SDE, starting by February 15, 2024, to annually publish each school district's receipts, expenditures, and statistics for the previous fiscal year. Additionally, starting February 15, 2025, SDE must annually prepare and publish the same data in a format that allows financial comparisons between school districts and schools ([PA 23-167](#), § 1, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***SDE Health Care Career Promotion***

Existing law requires the state's chief workforce officer, in consultation with various stakeholders, to develop a plan to work with high schools to encourage students to pursue high demand health care professions. A new law requires the education commissioner, in collaboration with the chief workforce officer, to use this plan in (1) promoting health care professions as career options to middle and high school students (e.g., through career day presentations and counseling programs) and (2) health care job shadowing and internship experiences for high school students. By September 1, 2023, the commissioner must (1) provide the plan to each school board and (2) support the plan's implementation through the governor's Workforce Council Education Committee ([PA 23-97](#), § 7, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***SDE Report to the Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA)***

A new law requires the education commissioner to submit to OFA a report on data relating to students collected in the statewide public school information system. The report must include the following information for each student: (1) grade, resident municipality, reporting district, and each facility attended; (2) whether the student receives a free or reduced-price lunch; (3) whether the

student is an English language learner; (4) any special program status code; and (5) whether the student is enrolled at no expense to the resident municipality.

The commissioner must submit the report twice each year: (1) from February 3 to February 15 with data for the current school year and (2) by August 30 with data for the prior school year ([PA 23-165](#), effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Student Enrollment Reporting***

This session the legislature enacted a law requiring new annual student enrollment reports. Specifically, by May 20 each year the act requires local and regional boards of education, magnet school operators, and charter school governing councils to report student enrollment data as of April 1 to SDE. Additionally, any local or regional board of education that (1) sends or receives Open Choice program students or (2) operates an agriscience and technology center must annually submit its student enrollment data as of April 1 to SDE. The magnet school, Open Choice, and agriscience program operators must report enrollment data separately for in-district and out-of-district students ([PA 23-167](#), § 37, effective July 1, 2023).

## **State Education Resource Center (SERC)**

### ***SERC Real Estate and Contracting***

New legislation removes from state law provisions that subject SERC to state oversight pertaining to (1) investing, buying, and disposing of real estate and (2) purchasing, procurement, personal service agreements, and asset disposition ([PA 23-160](#), § 9, effective July 1, 2023).

## **Students**

### ***Access to Adult Education***

A new law allows any parent under age 17, rather than only mothers under age 17 as permitted under prior law, to request permission from the board of education to attend adult education classes ([PA 23-160](#), § 4, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Dual Credit and Dual Enrollment Programs***

The legislature enacted a law that requires SDE, in partnership with boards of education and public higher education institutions, to expand opportunities for dual credit and dual enrollment for high school students, including courses required for health care occupations. The agency must do this by January 1, 2024, within available funding, and the expansion must include tuition assistance for

students who enroll in dual credit and dual enrollment programs ([PA 23-167](#), § 32, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***FAFSA Completion Requirement for High School Students***

Beginning with the graduating class of 2025, a new law prohibits school boards from allowing any student to graduate high school, or granting a diploma to any student, who has not completed a (1) Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or an application for institutional financial aid for students without legal immigration status or (2) signed a waiver declining to file the application. SDE must create the waiver form, which may be signed by a minor student’s parent or guardian, a student 18 years old or older, or a legally emancipated minor. The waiver cannot require its signatory to state any reasons for declining to complete the student aid application ([PA 23-204](#), §§ 319-322, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Multilingual Learners Bill of Rights***

A new law requires SBE to draft a written bill of rights for parents or guardians of multilingual learner students to guarantee that their rights are protected when bilingual education is provided as required under state law. Beginning with the 2024-25 school year, the law requires each local and regional board of education that provides bilingual education or English as a new language to give parents and guardians a copy of the bill of rights. The law also changes the term in education law for a student whose primary language is not English from “English learner” to “multilingual learner” ([PA 23-150](#), §§ 17-36, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Paraeducator Training Program for High School Students***

Under a new law, the education commissioner, in consultation with the School Paraeducator Advisory Council, must develop a model paraeducator (also known as paraprofessional) training program for high school students by January 1, 2024 ([PA 23-167](#), § 29, effective July 1, 2023).

## **Task Forces, Working Groups, and Studies**

### ***Alliance District Effectiveness Report***

A new law requires SDE to develop a report on the effectiveness of the alliance district program, including recommendations for changing the program. The agency must submit the report to the Appropriations and Education committees by January 1, 2026 ([PA 23-208](#), § 2, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Aviation and Aerospace Training and High School Feasibility Study***

The legislature passed a law that specifically allows school boards to partner with local businesses to provide aerospace and aviation apprenticeship training programs to students. The same law also requires the Connecticut Technical Education Career System executive director to convene a working group to determine the feasibility, cost, and plan to develop an aerospace advanced manufacturing high school. The executive director must report the working group's conclusions and recommendations to the Education Committee by January 1, 2025 ([PA 23-167](#), §§ 28 & 33, various effective dates).

### ***Blue-Ribbon Panel on Child Care***

This year's budget implementer act requires the OEC commissioner to annually report recommendations from the Blue-Ribbon Panel on Child Care to the Appropriations and Education committees. The governor's executive order (EO 23-1, March 17, 2023) established this panel, chaired by the OEC commissioner, to serve as his principal advisor on child care and early childhood issues and coordinate state agencies' efforts to promote an effective child care and early childhood education system ([PA 23-204](#), § 339, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Civics and Media Literacy Education***

This session the legislature enacted a law creating the 18-member Connecticut Civics Education, Civic Engagement, and Media Literacy Task Force to study and develop strategies to improve instruction on civics, citizenship, media literacy, and American government. It also adds civics and media literacy to the required public schools social studies program of instruction beginning in the 2025-26 school year. The task force must submit its report with any recommendations to the Education Committee by January 1, 2025 ([PA 23-150](#), §§ 6 & 7, various effective dates).

### ***Commission to Study Education Funding and Accountability***

A new law creates the Building Educational Responsibility with Greater Improvement Networks Commission to study various educational issues including (1) funding for local school districts, charter schools, and magnet schools and (2) accountability measures for alliance districts, charter schools, and magnet schools. The 20-member commission includes the education commissioner and legislative leaders, or their representatives, and education stakeholder representatives appointed by legislative leaders. It must submit its reports to the Appropriations and Education committees in two parts, the first by February 1, 2024, and the second by January 15, 2025 ([PA 23-167](#), § 36, effective upon passage).

### ***Education Mandate Working Group***

A new law requires the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education to convene an 11-member education mandate review working group to recommend to the legislature repealing or amending obsolete or duplicative mandates. The group must submit its recommendations by January 1, 2025 ([PA 23-160](#), § 1, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Family Resource Center Cost Study***

The legislature enacted a new law that requires each alliance district to develop a report on the cost of creating a family resource center in each of the district's elementary schools. The reports must be submitted to SDE by February 1, 2024 ([PA 23-208](#), § 4, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Health Care Magnet School Program Study***

Under a new law, the education commissioner, in consultation with the labor and public health commissioners, must study the feasibility of creating an interdistrict magnet school program to educate and train students interested in health care professions. This must include pathways for students to (1) graduate with a certification, license, or registration allowing them to practice in a health care field and (2) complete a curriculum designed to prepare them for pre-medicine or nursing higher education programs. The education commissioner must submit the study to the Public Health Committee by February 1, 2024 ([PA 23-97](#), § 38, effective upon passage).

### ***Mastery Exam Audit***

This year the legislature passed a law requiring the education commissioner to audit, within available appropriations, state and local standardized testing requirements and administration. Among other topics, the audit must focus on (1) the exams, which include the Smarter Balanced, next generation science, and SAT exams, and (2) exam preparation and administration time for students and teachers. The commissioner must report her findings and recommendations to the Appropriations and Education committees by January 1, 2025 ([PA 23-150](#), § 5 & [PA 23-167](#), § 25, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Report on CTECS Programs and Available Technical Careers***

The legislature enacted a new law that requires the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) board to study the programs offered at technical education and career high schools to determine whether they align with the available technical careers. The report is due to the Education Committee by January 1, 2025 ([PA 23-150](#), § 8, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***School Indoor Air Quality Working Group***

A new law expands the charge of, and extends the deadline for, the 23-member school indoor air quality working group. The expanded charge now includes making recommendations for (1) a needs-based system for equitably distributing HVAC system grants for schools and (2) ways to make accessible and searchable school indoor air quality inspection results. The group now has until July 1, 2024, rather than January 4, 2023, to report its findings to the Education, Labor and Public Employees, and Public Health committees ([PA 23-167](#), § 42, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***School Safety Drills Study***

This session the General Assembly passed legislation directing DESPP, in consultation with SDE and within available appropriations, to evaluate (1) the effectiveness of the number and implementation of fire drills and crisis response drills required by law and (2) these drills' effect on children's mental health, physical safety, and protection. DESPP must report its findings to the Education Committee by January 1, 2025 ([SA 23-31](#), effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Special Education Task Force***

The legislature expanded the charge and membership of the task force studying special education services and funding. Specifically, it passed a law requiring that the task force focus on special education services delivery and eligibility in addition to funding as prior law required. It also added eight members to the task force, bringing its total membership to 23. The act also extends the task force's termination date from January 1, 2024, to July 1, 2025, or when it submits its report, whichever is later ([PA 23-150](#), § 13, effective upon passage).

### ***State Review of Transition Programs***

A new law requires SERC, under SDE's supervision, to review each public transition program for special education students aged 18 to 22. The review must examine the types of services offered, staff numbers and qualifications, location relative to students' residence, and performance metrics. SERC must submit its findings to the Education Committee by February 1, 2024 ([PA 23-137](#), § 38, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Teachers' Retirement System Task Force***

The legislature enacted a new law that establishes a task force to analyze the per pupil equity of Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) funding. The task force must submit its recommendations to the Appropriations and Education committees by January 1, 2025 ([PA 23-159](#), § 9, effective July 1, 2023).

## ***Title IX Assessment Working Group***

A new law creates a 12-member working group to study the possibility of assessing all municipal recreation areas and facilities used for organized sports, and any sports facilities maintained by a public school, to determine whether they comply with Title IX of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1972 (a federal law aimed at ensuring male and female students and employees in educational settings are treated equally and fairly). The group must submit its findings and recommendations to the Education and Planning and Development committees by January 1, 2024 ([SA 23-18](#), effective upon passage).

## ***Virtual Reality Study***

A new law requires SDE to study the use of virtual reality in the high school classroom. Study topics must include best practices, safety measures, and program and equipment purchasing. The department must report its findings to the Education Committee by January 1, 2025 ([PA 23-167](#), § 7, effective upon passage).

## **Teachers and Other Education Employees**

### ***Adjunct Arts Instructor Permit***

A new public act allows SBE to issue adjunct instructor permits in the arts to applicants who hold a degree higher than a bachelor's and also meet other requirements in existing law. This permit's holder may teach art, music, dance, theater, or any subject related to the holder's artistic specialty for up to 15 hours per week in certain magnet schools ([PA 23-159](#), § 15, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Alliance District Educator and Counselor Loan Subsidy Program***

A new law requires the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority (CHESLA) to extend eligibility for the Alliance District Loan Subsidy Program to paraeducators and school counselors and renames the program the "Alliance District Educator and Counselor Loan Subsidy Program." This program provides subsidized interest rates on CHESLA loans to eligible borrowers employed in alliance districts, subject to available funding ([PA 23-70](#), §§ 4-5, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***ARC Program Expansion***

A new law requires the Office of Higher Education (OHE) to expand its alternate route to certification (ARC) program attended by minority teacher incentive program grant recipients. It also requires the office to hire one full-time, permanent employee to administer the expanded ARC program ([PA 23-159](#), § 14, effective upon passage).

### ***Aspiring Educators Diversity Scholarship Program***

This year the legislature made changes to the minority teacher candidate scholarship program, including changing the name to the aspiring educators' diversity scholarship program. The new law reduces the maximum annual grant amount from \$20,000 to \$10,000 and requires SDE to hire four staff members to administer the program. The law also makes conforming changes by replacing references to "minority" students with "diverse students." The terms have the same meaning under prior law and the act ([PA 23-167](#), §§ 11 & 18, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Cease and Desist Orders for Prohibited Practices***

The legislature enacted a new law that allows the State Board of Labor Relations (SBLR) to issue a cease-and-desist order for certain violations of the teachers collective bargaining law (e.g., refusal to negotiate in good faith or retaliating against a complainant). With this law, when an alleged prohibited practice or breach of duty is ongoing, SBLR may order the party committing the action to cease and desist any further action until the board makes a determination on the matter ([PA 23-159](#), § 2, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Certificate Endorsements for Preschool and Kindergarten Teaching***

A new law allows the education commissioner to allow a teacher with a (1) grade one to six endorsement to teach kindergarten for a second year without proving enrollment in a kindergarten endorsement program or (2) grade one to 12 comprehensive special education endorsement to teach preschool in addition to kindergarten as allowed under prior law ([PA 23-159](#), § 13, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Educator Apprenticeship Program***

A new law requires SDE to establish, beginning with FY 24, an educator apprenticeship initiative to enable students in teacher preparation programs to gain paid classroom teaching experience. The law applies to students enrolled in educator preparation programs, teacher residency programs, or ARC programs. SDE must seek certification of the program with the DOL ([PA 23-167](#), § 8, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Educator Diversity Policy Oversight Council***

A new law renames the Minority Teacher Recruitment Oversight Council as the Increasing Educator Diversity Policy Oversight Council. The council is a seven-member body within SDE charged with advising the education commissioner on ways to encourage minority students and professionals from other fields to pursue teaching careers. The law makes related changes by replacing the term



“minority” with “diverse” without changing its underlying meaning ([PA 23-167](#), §§ 12-14, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Exit Survey for Teachers Leaving the Profession***

Due to a new law, school boards are now required to (1) develop and conduct exit surveys of teachers voluntarily leaving employment with the board and (2) add teacher attrition rates to their strategic school profile report that they annually submit to SDE ([PA 23-159](#), §§ 6-7, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Health Insurance Programs for Paraeducators***

The legislature required the comptroller to establish two programs providing subsidies and stipends to paraeducators for certain health insurance and health care related costs. The first program provides a subsidy reimbursement for paraeducators’ costs to initially fund a health savings account (HSA), which is a tax-advantaged account available to people with high-deductible health plans. The second provides a stipend to purchase qualified health insurance to paraeducators who meet certain eligibility criteria and generally do not have access to health insurance that meets specified standards. The law also makes conforming changes ([PA 23-204](#), §§ 203-206 & 421, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***IEP Review by Paraprofessionals***

A new law requires school paraprofessionals, or any other paraprofessional providing special education or related services to a student, to review a student’s IEP with a supervisor as needed. Prior law allowed paraprofessionals to review IEPs without a supervisor being present ([PA 23-159](#), § 12, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***In-Service Violence Prevention and Seizure Response Training***

The legislature enacted a new law that makes changes to in-service training for certified staff. The law requires the in-service training on school violence prevention, which boards of education must annually provide to teachers, administrators, and other certified school employees, be aligned with DESPP’s school security and safety plan standards. It also requires in-service trainings to include emergency responses to students who have seizures in school ([PA 23-160](#), § 2, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Limiting Use of edTPA***

Retroactive to July 1, 2022, a new law requires that the state’s teacher preservice performance assessment, edTPA, only be used as an accountability measure for teacher preparation programs

and bars SBE from using edTPA assessment results to deny an application for an initial educator certificate. In 2016, SBE approved a resolution that required all teacher preparation programs in the state to require satisfactory completion of edTPA by all teacher candidates in order to complete a teacher preparation program ([PA 23-159](#), § 1, effective upon passage).

### ***New Adjunct Professor Permit***

In recent years the legislature has sought new ways to provide more flexibility in hiring educators at the school district level. Beginning with the 2023-24 school year, a new law allows SBE to issue adjunct professor permits to allow part-time, nontenured college instructors to work part-time for school districts. It allows permit holders to teach in public high schools for up to 25 classroom instructional hours per week as part of college and career readiness programming, including an early college experience program, advanced placement classes, career and technical education, and several other programs specified in the new law ([PA 23-167](#), § 15, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Paraeducator Professional Development***

This year the legislature enacted a new law that, among other things, made various changes in laws affecting paraeducators' professional development. Specifically, it requires SDE to annually update its guidance and best practices for paraeducator professional development programs in collaboration with the School Paraeducator Advisory Council. It also adds a paraeducator to each school district's professional development and evaluation committee.

Additionally, beginning in the 2023-24 school year, the act prohibits otherwise-mandated trainings (e.g., training on blood-borne pathogens, sexual harassment, or DCF policies and procedures) from counting towards the free, 18-hour professional development program that boards must make available to paraeducators ([PA 23-159](#), §§ 10 & 11, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Purchasing Teacher Retirement Credit***

Generally, purchases of additional teacher retirement credit are limited to a total of 10 years, but service as a public school teacher in another state is exempt from the limit. A new law makes service at SERC and the out-of-state teaching service, combined, exempt from the 10 year limit ([PA 23-159](#), § 19, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Review of Local Increasing Educator Diversity Plans***

This year the legislature passed a new law that requires each school board to (1) submit its increasing educator diversity plan (referred to in prior law as the minority educator recruitment plan) to the education commissioner by March 15, 2024, for review and approval and (2)

implement its approved plan beginning with the 2024-25 school year ([PA 23-167](#), §§ 9 & 10, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***School Nurses and Nurse Practitioners***

A new law exempts nurses or nurse practitioners who are appointed or contracted by boards of education from having at least one year of full-time work experience in the five years immediately before assuming their school position. State regulations currently require this work experience. Additionally, the act requires employing boards of education to give at least 15 hours of professional development biennially to school nurses and nurse practitioners beginning in the 2024-25 school year ([PA 23-167](#), §§ 34 & 35, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Student Teaching***

By law, teacher preparation program participants must complete a clinical, field, or student teaching experience in a classroom during four semesters. A new act removes the requirement that (1) this experience occur in two school districts from certain categories of district reference groups and (2) any cooperating teacher must have earned a performance evaluation designation of “exemplary” or “proficient” in the prior school year to mentor student teachers ([PA 23-159](#), § 16, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Substitute Teachers***

A new law allows school boards to employ a substitute teacher for up to 60 days without obtaining an SDE-issued substitute authorization, so long as the substitute is in the same assignment for the entire period ([PA 23-159](#), § 18, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Teacher Certification Integrated and New Cross Endorsements***

Beginning on July 1, 2023, a new law allows SDE, in cooperation with the OHE, to authorize three new endorsements affecting early childhood education, special education, and grades K to three teaching positions ([PA 23-159](#), § 17, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Teacher Performance Evaluations***

A new law requires local and regional boards of education to adopt revised teacher evaluation programs. It correspondingly requires SBE to adopt revised program guidelines that use new (1) student indicators and assessment methods and (2) teacher feedback mechanisms. The act maintains the option for boards of education to adopt SBE’s model teacher evaluation and support program, but it requires SBE to ensure that its model program aligns with these revised guidelines ([PA 23-159](#), §§ 23-27, effective July 1, 2023).

## ***Teacher Professional Standards Advisory Council***

A new law revises and expands the membership of the Teacher Professional Standards Advisory Council, including adding the Teacher of the Year and the previous year's Teacher of the Year ([PA 23-159](#), § 8, effective July 1, 2023).

## ***Teachers' Retirement Board Membership***

A new law increases, from 14 members to 16, the size of the Teachers' Retirement Board by adding two retired members of the TRS. Under the act, these members must (1) be retired teachers who are receiving a pension benefit from TRS, (2) be nominated and elected by retired TRS members, and (3) serve four-year terms. The act requires that elections for these new members be as prescribed by the board and held quadrennially by October 1 starting in 2023 ([PA 23-63](#), effective upon passage).

## ***Teacher Tenure and Accumulated Sick Leave***

State law maintains a teacher's tenure and accumulated sick leave in the event the school district that the teacher works for subsequently joins a regional school district. A new law modifies this to include when a teacher with tenure and accumulated leave who works for a school district or a regional school district begins working for a newly established regional school district. As with existing law, the teacher must work for a school district or regional school district during the school year immediately before, or within which, the new regional district is established and continues as an employee of the new regional district ([PA 23-159](#), § 22, effective July 1, 2023).

## ***TRS Membership Additions***

This year the legislature expanded the state's TRS to cover teachers employed by an interdistrict magnet school operated by (1) a private higher education institution's board of governors; (2) an SDE-approved, third-party nonprofit corporation; or (3) Goodwin University Magnet Schools, Inc. and Goodwin University Educational Services, Inc. ([PA 23-159](#), §§ 20 & 21, effective July 1, 2023).

## ***TRS Membership Eligibility Change***

The legislature changed the eligibility criteria for membership in TRS for certain professional SBE staff. Under existing law, the TRS definition of a "teacher" eligible for membership includes professional staff employed by SBE, OEC, the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) or any of the constituent units of higher education, and the CTECS. For SBE only, the legislation removes a requirement that the professional staff be employed in an educational role and instead defines "teacher" as a member of the professional staff who is currently a TRS member and maintains certification (presumably certification as a teacher) ([PA 23-204](#), § 318, effective July 1, 2023).

## **Technology and Remote Learning**

### ***Dual Instruction Via Remote Learning***

A new law allows dual instruction as part of remote learning when (1) needed to implement a student's IEP or 504 plan or (2) part of an intradistrict or interdistrict cooperative learning program for students on school grounds during a regular school day. Under the act, "remote learning" is instruction using one or more internet-based software platforms as part of a remote learning model, and "dual instruction" is simultaneous instruction by a teacher to (1) students in-person in the classroom and (2) students engaged in remote learning ([PA 23-150](#), § 12, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Eligibility for Statewide Remote Learning School***

Existing law requires SDE to develop a plan to create and implement a statewide remote learning school for grades K-12. When making the plan, SDE must estimate the number of Connecticut students who may be eligible to enroll. A new law limits eligibility to those students who are unable to attend school in-person due to a (1) medical diagnosis, including a psychological or physical condition or restriction, or (2) medical exemption to required immunizations as documented by the child's health care provider. The act also extends the plan's submission deadline to the Appropriations and Education committees to January 1, 2024 ([PA 23-160](#), § 5, effective July 1, 2023).

## **Higher Education**

### ***Access to Reproductive Health Care by Students at Public Colleges and Universities***

The legislature recently passed a law requiring BOR and the UConn Board of Trustees (BOT), by January 1, 2024, to establish and update as needed a plan to provide reproductive health care services by licensed health care providers to students who live on public college and university campuses with student housing that are under the boards' jurisdiction. Among other things, the plan must address (1) the availability of equipment and licensed health care providers to provide on-campus reproductive health care services or in the surrounding community, and (2) means for ensuring continuity of care during holiday and vacation periods and in between semesters ([PA 23-41](#), effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Advanced Manufacturing Education Center Working Group***

This session, the legislature established an 11-member working group to help expand an advanced manufacturing technology center at a community college in the state. The working group must develop an implementation plan for the center, including the budget, timeline, and funding

mechanisms for (1) establishing an Industry 4.0 manufacturing technology career pathway model for secondary and community college level institutions, (2) robotics programs for K-12 students in certain underserved communities, and (3) a community robotics center. It must report its findings and recommendations to the governor and General Assembly by January 1, 2024 ([PA 23-4](#), effective upon passage).

### ***Alliance District Educator and Counselor Loan Subsidy Program***

A new law requires the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority (CHESLA) to extend eligibility for the Alliance District Loan Subsidy Program to paraeducators and school counselors and renames the program the “Alliance District Educator and Counselor Loan Subsidy Program.” This program provides subsidized interest rates on CHESLA loans to eligible borrowers employed in alliance districts, subject to available funding ([PA 23-70](#), §§ 4-5, effective January 1, 2024).

### ***BOR Disposition of Surplus Real Property***

A new law allows BOR, with the Office of Policy and Management’s secretary’s review and approval, to sell surplus Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) property outside of the existing disposition process for surplus state property. Under the act, BOR may sell, exchange, lease, convey, or transfer surplus property that (1) a CSCU institution controls and has custody over, and (2) is no longer needed to discharge any of the institution’s functions, as BOR determines. The sale must be at fair market value and meet other specified conditions. By law, UConn is also exempt from the existing disposition process ([CGS § 4b-21](#)) ([PA 23-204](#), § 87, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***CHESLA Loan Subsidy Programs for Police Officers and Specified Health Care Professionals***

A new law requires CHESLA, by July 1, 2024, to establish a Police Officer Loan Subsidy Program to subsidize interest rates on CHESLA loans to eligible municipal police officers employed in distressed municipalities, subject to available funding. The act requires CHESLA to establish the program’s eligibility criteria and administrative guidelines in consultation with the Police Officer Standards Training Council ([PA 23-70](#), § 6, effective January 1, 2024).

The legislature also passed a law requiring CHESLA to establish a Nursing and Mental Health Care Professionals Loan Subsidy Program to subsidize interest rates on CHESLA refinancing loans to certain Connecticut licensed nurses, nurse’s aides, psychologists, marital and family therapists, clinical and master social workers, and professional counselors ([PA 23-60](#), effective July 1, 2023). Another new law expands this program to emergency medical service professionals, requiring them to (1) be DPH-certified as an emergency medical responder, emergency medical technician, or

advanced emergency medical technician, and (2) meet the program’s eligibility criteria and administrative guidelines set by CHESLA and the education commissioner ([PA 23-70](#), §§ 7-8, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Child Care Centers Near Certain Campuses***

Existing law requires BOR to consult with OEC to develop a plan to increase the number of OEC-licensed child care centers or group child care homes on or near each community college and state university campus. The plan must include the development, expansion, and maintenance of child care facilities (1) used by an early childhood education program for instructional purposes or (2) that provide evening and weekend child care services in accordance with college or university course schedules. Under a new law, the plan must include additional components, including (1) an assessment of the student body’s child care needs and the existing child care services and facilities available on each campus or in the surrounding community and (2) a budget and implementation timeline for the plan ([PA 23-118](#), effective upon passage).

### ***Clinical Rotation Credit Reciprocity Agreements***

A new law allows OHE to enter into a reciprocity agreement with one or more neighboring states regarding clinical training credit at higher education institutions. Under the agreement, the other state may allow students attending a college or university in that state to train in a clinical rotation for credit in Connecticut, as long as that state also allows a student attending a Connecticut college or university to train in a clinical rotation for credit in the other state ([PA 23-97](#), § 23, effective upon passage).

### ***Community College Campus Foundations***

The legislature enacted a series of changes to account for the recent consolidation of the community colleges into campuses of the new Connecticut State Community College. Among these are changes that allow each new campus to retain an existing supporting foundation (or establish a new one if one does not exist) ([PA 23-3](#), effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Competitive Processes for Goods and Services Purchases***

The budget and implementer act increases, from \$50,000 to \$100,000, the maximum cost of a goods and services procurement for which UConn and CSCU do not need to solicit competitive bids or proposals. Under the new law, UConn and CSCU generally must make purchases of \$100,000 or less in the open market but must base them, when possible, on three competitive quotations. If the purchase exceeds \$100,000, then UConn and CSCU generally must submit competitive bids or

proposals by posting notice online at least five calendar days before the closing date for submitting bids or proposals.

Existing law sets a number of exceptions to the above purchasing requirements, including one for minor purchases. The new law increases, from \$10,000 to \$25,000, the maximum cost of a minor purchase that is exempt from these requirements ([PA 23-204](#), § 429, effective October 1, 2023).

### ***Connecticut Health and Education Finance Authority (CHEFA) Bonding Expansion***

A new law expands CHEFA’s authority to fund projects at higher education institutions, health care institutions, nursing homes, and nonprofits to include projects involving programs or services that further their organizations or missions. It also broadens the type of project expenses CHEFA can fund through bonds to include all other costs and expenses necessary or incident to a project, its operation and financing, and getting it into operation, rather than only including these expenses when they are necessary and incident to the project’s construction and acquisition. It also makes other minor changes ([PA 23-11](#), effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Connecticut Open Educational Resource (OER) Coordinating Council***

By law, the Connecticut OER Coordinating Council must establish an OER program to lower the cost of textbooks and course materials for high-impact courses at state higher education institutions. A new law redefines OER, thus changing the scope of the council’s duties. It also (1) transfers the OER Coordinating Council from OHE to CSCU and makes conforming changes; (2) expands restrictions on council grant award recipients; (3) expands the council’s duties; (4) requires it to include additional information in its biennial report to the legislature; and (5) allows the OER statewide coordinator to hire a part-time employee ([PA 23-151](#) & [PA 23-204](#), § 95, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Constituent Unit Employee Retirement Costs***

The legislature changed how public higher education employees’ retirement costs are funded. Under prior law, the Office of the State Comptroller paid the fringe benefit costs, using the resources appropriated for the State Comptroller-Fringe Benefits, of constituent unit employees who are paid out of the General Fund, while the individual constituent units of the state higher education system paid for those who are paid from other sources (e.g., tuition revenue). Constituent units are UConn and the CSCUs, which includes the community colleges and Charter Oak State College.



Under the new act, beginning FY 24, the comptroller must pay the retirement-related fringe costs for all constituent unit employees, and the constituent units must pay the non-retirement employee fringe costs (i.e., health and life insurance, unemployment compensation, and social security tax) ([PA 23-204](#), §§ 89 & 445, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Cooperative Purchasing and Purchases From Other States***

A new law expands the authority for UConn and CSCU to make cooperative purchases or purchases under an existing contract held by another entity (i.e., “piggyback”). Specifically, it allows UConn and CSCU to join with another Connecticut state branch, division, or department, or with one another, in a cooperative purchasing plan if it would serve the state’s best interests. It also allows them to purchase goods and services from a person with a contract to sell them to a federal agency; another Connecticut state branch, division, or department; or another constituent unit of higher education ([PA 23-204](#), § 428, effective upon passage).

### ***Debt-Free Community College Program***

Recent legislation extends eligibility for the state’s debt-free community college program (i.e., the Pledge to Advance Connecticut (PACT) program) to returning students ([PA 23-204](#), § 134, effective July 1, 2024).

### ***Global Entrepreneur in Residence Program Study***

A new 21-member working group will study the feasibility of leveraging the H-1B visa cap exemption process at state universities to fill high-value job openings and promote workforce development using the Global Entrepreneur in Residence Program as a model. Among other things, the working group’s study must (1) include recommendations for establishing an international workforce pipeline and (2) examine the barriers businesses face when hiring international students. The group must report its findings and recommendations to the Committee by January 1, 2024 ([SA 23-11](#), effective upon passage).

### ***Green Jobs Workforce Training Plan and Career Ladder***

A new law requires the Connecticut Clean Economy Council (CCEC) to develop a workforce training plan for green jobs (i.e., jobs that employ green technology) to accomplish the state’s greenhouse gas emissions goals. It must develop the plan by January 1, 2024, and submit it to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee by February 1, 2024. Among other things, the plan must include the following:

1. development of work-based learning programs for green jobs with workforce shortages,

2. development of certificate and degree programs related to the green technology industry at technical education and career schools and in-state higher education institutions, and
3. identification of available public or private funding to develop these programs and provide grants to apprentices and students.

The new law also shifts responsibility for establishing and updating the green jobs career ladder to the CCEC. Prior law required the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS), in consultation with specified agencies, regional workforce development boards, and employers, to do so ([PA 23-61](#), effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Health Care Provider Adjunct Faculty and Incentive Grants***

Under new laws, starting January 1, 2024, public colleges and universities must (1) consider any licensed health care provider with at least 10 years of clinical experience to be qualified for an adjunct faculty position in a health care field in which he or she is experienced and (2) give them the same consideration as other qualified applicants. Correspondingly, the new laws require OHE, by January 1, 2024, and within available appropriations, to establish a program providing incentive grants to providers who become adjunct professors under these provisions. Providers are eligible for a \$20,000 grant after one academic year and a second \$20,000 grant after two academic years. The OHE executive director must annually report on the program to the Public Health Committee, starting by January 1, 2025 ([PA 23-97](#), §§ 9 & 10 and [PA 23-204](#), §§ 132 & 133, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Health Care Workforce Working Group***

Under a new law, OWS must convene a 26-member working group to develop recommendations for expanding the health care workforce in the state. Among other things, the group must evaluate the (1) quality of in-state education and clinical training programs for nurses and nurse's aides, (2) potential for increasing the number of these clinical training sites, and (3) expansion of these clinical training facilities. By January 1, 2024, the group must report to the Public Health and Higher Education and Employment Advancement committees, including a five- and 10-year plan to increase this workforce ([PA 23-97](#), § 8, effective upon passage).

### ***Higher Education Contracting***

New legislation (1) increases, from \$2 million to \$3 million, the cost of a capital project that CSCU may administer and (2) requires that this threshold be adjusted for inflation beginning July 1, 2028 ([PA 23-205](#), §§ 105 & 106, effective July 1, 2023).

A new law allows, for UConn construction manager at-risk (CMR) projects that involve renovating existing buildings or facilities, (1) certain work to begin before the project's guaranteed maximum price (GMP) is set and (2) a separate GMP to be set for each phase of a multiphase project. Generally, this aligns UConn's CMR requirements with those for DAS CMR projects ([PA 23-204](#), § 430, effective upon passage).

### ***Higher Education Reporting Changes***

The legislature made two changes to how certain higher education programs must report data to the General Assembly. The first delays, by one month, an annual deadline for reporting on the state's debt-free community college program (i.e., PACT program) ([PA 23-141](#), effective July 1, 2023). The second requires BOR to report annually comparing certain performance metrics from before the regional community-technical colleges consolidated into the CT State Community College to after the consolidation ([PA 23-8](#), effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Independent College and University Program Approval Exemptions***

This session, the legislature made permanent the law exempting qualifying independent colleges and universities from OHE's program approval process for an unlimited number of higher education programs per academic year. The act requires these exempt institutions to update the credentials database at least annually with any new, modified, or discontinued programs ([PA 23-204](#), § 96, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***LPN Education Pilot Program***

A new law allows public or independent colleges and universities, by January 30, 2024, to apply to the State Board of Examiners for Nursing to create a pilot program offering licensed practical nursing (LPN) education and training, as long as they meet certain eligibility requirements. If the program is approved and meets certain requirements for at least two years, it is deemed fully approved ([PA 23-97](#), § 22, effective upon passage).

### ***Nursing Student Clinical Placement Task Force***

A new 11-member task force must develop a plan to establish clinical placements for nursing students at public and private colleges and universities. Among other things, the task force must examine the following:

1. the types of state facilities that can accommodate these clinical placements, including state correctional facilities and facilities operated by DMHAS, DCF, and DDS;
2. the number and type of clinical placements that may be established at each state facility;

3. the staffing requirements for providing the clinical placements and the facilities' compliance with them; and
4. the total and per-student cost to state facilities to provide the clinical placements.

The task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee by January 1, 2024 ([PA 23-70](#), § 1, effective upon passage).

### ***OHE Ethnic and Racial Diversity Plan***

A new law replaces OHE's ethnic and racial diversity plan requirements under prior law with similar requirements under its minority advancement program. Specifically, it eliminates a requirement that OHE, in consultation with the constituent units, develop and maintain an affirmative action plan that ensures that Connecticut higher education institution students, faculty, administrators, and staff are representative of the state's racial and ethnic diversity. However, the act adds similar provisions into the existing OHE minority advancement program. This program supports higher education institutions in meeting their ethnic and racial diversity goals and ensures this representation in these institutions ([PA 23-204](#), §§ 85-86, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Pledge to Advance CT Funding and Online Lottery Sales***

A new law changes how PACT (the state's debt-free community college program) is funded. Prior law generally dedicated online lottery sales revenue by requiring the Connecticut Lottery Corporation (CLC) to deposit proceeds into the online lottery ticket sales fund to (1) make specified transfers to the General Fund and debt-free community college account and (2) pay CLC's costs for the online lottery program. (CLC has not yet implemented online lottery ticket sales.) The act eliminates the dedicated account for online lottery proceeds and the required fund transfers, instead directing the revenue to CLC's lottery and gaming fund ([PA 23-204](#), §§ 90-94 & 445, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Prohibiting Gambling Solicitations***

Under a new law, public colleges and universities may not profit or receive money for allowing a sponsor, marketing company, or other entity to directly solicit enrolled students to gamble online ([PA 23-68](#), effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Prohibiting Withholding Transcripts Due to Debt***

A new law generally prohibits Connecticut colleges and universities from withholding a student's transcript from a student's employer, prospective employer, or a branch of the U.S. military because he or she owes the institution a debt ([PA 23-14](#), effective October 1, 2023).

## ***Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program***

This session, the legislature made various changes to the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship program, including (1) requiring OHE to make FY 24 awards for the program from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds allocated to it, before using any General Fund appropriations, and (2) excluding community colleges from the program, making their students ineligible. Beginning July 1, 2024, the new law also requires the program to use the “student aid index” rather than “family contribution” to determine student eligibility, to reflect changes in federal law ([PA 23-208](#), § 11, effective July 1, 2023).

## ***Student Loan Lenders and Creditors***

A budget and implementer act provision requires private education lenders and creditors to register with the Department of Banking (DOB) and annually submit certain loan information. The information the lenders and creditors must provide includes things such as the schools their borrowers attend, amount of loans provided, and default rates. DOB must publish a summary of the information on a public website, including registrant contact information and lender model loan documents.

This act also (1) extends existing law’s registration requirement for federal student loan servicers to cover subservicers of these loans and (2) requires these subservicers to notify the DOB commissioner in writing when a U.S. Department of Education awarded contract expires or is revoked or terminated ([PA 23-204](#), §§ 166 & 168-169, effective October 1, 2023).

## ***Student Loan Ombudsman***

The budget and implementer act establishes an Office of the Student Loan Ombudsman and requires the DOB commissioner to appoint an ombudsman to head the office. Under prior law, the commissioner had to appoint an ombudsman within DOB, but only within available appropriations. The act generally assigns to the office the responsibilities that were previously set in law for the student loan ombudsman (e.g., helping student loan borrowers understand their rights and responsibilities and providing information about these borrowers’ problems and concerns) ([PA 23-204](#), § 167, effective October 1, 2023).

## ***Student Loan Reimbursement***

A new law requires the OHE executive director, within available appropriations, to establish a pilot program to annually reimburse eligible people for up to \$5,000 of their student loan payments per year, for up to four years. For each year they participate in the program, individuals must volunteer at a nonprofit for at least 50 unpaid hours (military service or serving on a nonprofit’s board of directors may fulfill this requirement).

To qualify, participants must meet specified residency and income criteria and either (1) have attended, graduated with a bachelor's degree from, or left in good standing an in-state college or university or (2) hold certain state-issued occupational or professional licenses. Under the act, these reimbursements are exempt from Connecticut state income tax to the extent they are taxable for federal income tax purposes ([PA 23-204](#), §§ 174 & 175, effective July 1, 2024, except the tax provisions are effective January 1, 2024, and applicable to tax years starting on or after that date).

### ***Tuition Waivers for Graduate Degree Programs at Public Colleges and Universities***

Existing law requires Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU), UConn, and the community colleges to waive tuition fees for certain veterans and other eligible students. A new law codifies existing practice by requiring CSCU and UConn to waive both undergraduate and graduate degree program tuition fees for these students ([PA 23-139](#), effective July 1, 2023).

### ***UConn 2000 Infrastructure Program***

This session, the legislature reduced the total bond authorization for the UConn 2000 infrastructure program by \$12 million, from \$3.295 billion to \$3.283 billion. The act makes a corresponding change to reduce the FY 25 bond cap by the same amount (from \$56 million to \$44 million) ([PA 23-1](#), §§ 6 & 7, effective upon passage).

### ***UConn Center for Sustainable Aviation***

A new law requires UConn to submit, or participate in submitting, a proposal for federal funding under the U.S. Department of Energy's Regional Clean Hydrogen Hubs program to establish, develop, and operate a center for sustainable aviation. If UConn is awarded and accepts this funding, it must (1) notify DECD and (2) establish the center, including at least one facility on the Storrs campus.

The act also requires DECD to provide a grant to UConn within 90 days after receiving notice from the university that it was awarded, and has accepted, federal funding to establish the center for sustainable aviation. The grant must be equal to the lesser of (1) \$20 million or (2) the state's share of the center's capital costs, as determined by the DECD commissioner and pursuant to the proposal and final award ([PA 23-1](#), §§ 2-5, effective upon passage).

### ***UConn Contractor Prequalification***

The budget and implementer act generally increases, from \$500,000 to \$1 million, the threshold at which UConn must separately prequalify public works contractors. It also eliminates a requirement

that the university separately prequalify contractors for each project and instead allows UConn to prequalify contractors for one year and renew the prequalification for two years.

Additionally, prior law required that contractors seeking prequalification from UConn be prequalified by DAS. The new legislation specifies that this requirement applies only when contractors are subject to DAS prequalification ([PA 23-204](#), §§ 431 & 432, effective October 1, 2023).

## **Libraries**

### ***Construction Grants to Public Libraries***

A new law increases the maximum grant amounts allowed for public library construction projects. Prior law authorized the State Library Board to award grants for public library construction for up to one-half of a project's total construction costs, subject to a \$1 million per project cap. For project applications submitted on or after July 1, 2023, the new law increases the (1) grant amount allowed for projects in distressed municipalities to up to 80% of the total construction costs and (2) maximum grant allowed for any project to \$2 million. The new law also authorizes state general obligation bonds of up to \$5 million per year for FYs 24-25 for these grants ([PA 23-205](#), §§ 13(h), 32(g) & 60, effective July 1, 2023).

### ***Principal Public Library Grants***

A new law prohibits any principal public library from receiving state grants unless it maintains and adheres to collection development, collection management, and collection reconsideration policies that have been approved by the library's governing body. The collection reconsideration policy must offer residents a clear process to request a reconsideration of library materials. The act specifies that if there is a book challenge, these policies must govern ([PA 23-101](#), § 2, effective July 1, 2023).

## **Additional Minor Acts**

### ***Various Acts***

In addition to the acts summarized above, several other acts make minor changes affecting education. These acts include the following:

1. [PA 23-150](#), § 4 (changes the name of "local and regional early childhood councils" to "local early childhood collaboratives");
2. [PA 23-160](#), §§ 11-28 (makes technical, grammatical, and conforming changes in the early childhood and education statutes);

3. [PA 23-160](#), § 30 (sunsets a targeted magnet school grant for a school that no longer exists in its original form or location (Edison Magnet in Meriden now reconstituted as ACES at Chase in Waterbury; ACES at Chase is eligible for other magnet grants)); and
4. [PA 23-204](#), § 187 (exempts the Police Athletic League of Stamford, Inc., from OEC licensure requirements for child care service providers).

JM:co