



Substitute Senate Bill No. 14

Public Act No. 24-78

AN ACT ASSISTING SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES, IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND CAREER SYSTEM AND ESTABLISHING EARLY START CT.

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

Section 1. Subsection (a) of section 10-14z of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

(a) There is established an Office of Dyslexia and Reading Disabilities within the Department of Education which shall be under the management of a chief. The chief shall be qualified by training and experience to perform the duties of the office, including, but not limited to, expertise in higher education, dyslexia and structured literacy. The Office of Dyslexia and Reading Disabilities shall (1) verify the compliance of (A) educator preparation programs, as defined in section 10-146c, including intermediate administrator and supervisor programs, and (B) applicants for an initial, provisional or professional educator certificate pursuant to the provisions of chapter 166 relating to scientifically-based reading research and instruction, as defined in section 10-14u, structured literacy instruction and training, dyslexia instruction and training, including, but not limited to, the compliance

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verifications required pursuant to sections 10-14aa to 10-14cc, inclusive; (2) review and recommend changes, as necessary, to the State Board of Education's process for approval of educator preparation programs related to such compliance verifications; and (3) provide guidance to and consult with the department's Talent Office related to such compliance verifications.

Sec. 2. Subsection (a) of section 10-14gg of the 2024 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

(a) The Department of Education shall establish a Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success within the department. The center shall be responsible for (1) the implementation of the coordinated state-wide reading plan for students in kindergarten to grade three, inclusive, established pursuant to section 10-14v; (2) researching and developing, in collaboration with the Office of Early Childhood, a birth to grade twelve reading success strategy to be included in the alignment of reading instruction with the two-generational initiative, established pursuant to section 17b-112l; (3) (A) providing direct support to schools and boards of education to improve reading outcomes for students in kindergarten to grade three, inclusive, and other reading initiatives, and (B) supporting teachers, schools and boards of education engaged in improving through coaching, leadership training, professional development, parental engagement and technical assistance that is consistent with the intensive reading instruction program, as described in section 10-14u and aligned with evidence-based practices; (4) providing independent, random reviews of how a local or regional board of education is implementing (A) a comprehensive reading curriculum model or program for grades kindergarten to grade three, inclusive, pursuant to section 10-14hh, and (B) an approved reading assessment, pursuant to section 10-14t; (5) receiving and publicly reporting, not later than September 1, 2025, and biennially thereafter,

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the comprehensive reading curriculum model or program being implemented by each local and regional board of education pursuant to section 10-14hh; (6) developing and maintaining an Internet web site for the purpose of disseminating tools and information associated with the intensive reading instruction program for student reading; and (7) serving as a collaborative center for institutions of higher education and making available to the faculty of teacher preparation programs [(A) the science of teaching reading, (B) the intensive reading instruction program, and (C) samples of available comprehensive reading curriculum models or programs reviewed and approved pursuant to section 10-14ii; and (8) reviewing and publicly reporting on progress made by teacher preparation programs to include comprehensive reading curriculum models or programs reviewed and approved pursuant to section 10-14ii] (A) resources and research supporting scientifically-based reading research and instruction, and (B) Connecticut's K-3 Literacy Strategy, developed by the center.

Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2024*) Not later than July 1, 2025, the Department of Education shall develop compliance measures and audit procedures to determine the compliance of educator preparation programs, including intermediate administrator and supervisor programs, in the provision of instruction on scientifically-based reading research and instruction, as defined in section 10-14u of the general statutes.

Sec. 4. (*Effective July 1, 2024*) (a) As used in this section, "advanced course or program" means an honors class, advanced placement class, International Baccalaureate program, Cambridge International program, dual enrollment program, dual credit course or program, early college program or any other advanced or accelerated course or program that is offered, and for which credit is awarded, by a local or regional board of education in grades nine to twelve, inclusive.

(b) The Department of Education shall conduct a study regarding the

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feasibility of establishing and administering a state-wide program that supports public high school students in participating in an advanced course or program, and which gives priority to students from low-income families. In conducting such study, the department shall consult with local and regional boards of education and public and independent institutions of higher education. Such study shall review current in-state programs to provide advanced courses or programs, identify and analyze similar programs in other states and provide recommendations on the framework and criteria for implementing a state-wide program in the state.

(c) Not later than January 1, 2026, the department shall submit such report, and any recommendations on the establishment and implementation of such state-wide program, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes.

Sec. 5. Subsection (f) of section 10-5 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

(f) [Not later than September 1, 2017, the State Board of Education] The Department of Education shall establish criteria by which a local or regional board of education, or the governing board of any other school that awards diplomas, may affix the Connecticut State Seal of Biliteracy on a diploma awarded to a student who has achieved a high level of proficiency in English and one or more foreign languages. For purposes of this subsection, "foreign language" means a world language other than English and includes American Sign Language and any other language spoken by a [federally recognized] Native American tribe.

Sec. 6. Subdivision (1) of subsection (k) of section 10-264l of the 2024 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

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(k) (1) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2014, and each fiscal year thereafter, any tuition charged to a local or regional board of education by (A) a regional educational service center operating an interdistrict magnet school, [or any tuition charged by] (B) the Hartford school district operating the Great Path Academy on behalf of Manchester Community College, or (C) any interdistrict magnet school operator described in section 10-264s, for any student enrolled in kindergarten to grade twelve, inclusive, in such interdistrict magnet school shall be in an amount equal to the difference between (A) the average per pupil expenditure of the magnet school for the prior fiscal year, and (B) the amount of any per pupil state subsidy calculated under subsection (c) of this section plus any revenue from other sources calculated on a per pupil basis, except for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, and each fiscal year thereafter, the per student tuition charged to a local or regional board of education shall not exceed fifty-eight per cent the per student tuition charged during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024. If any such board of education fails to pay such tuition, the commissioner may withhold from such board's town or towns a sum payable under section 10-262i in an amount not to exceed the amount of the unpaid tuition to the magnet school and pay such money to the fiscal agent for the magnet school as a supplementary grant for the operation of the interdistrict magnet school program. In no case shall the sum of such tuitions exceed the difference between (i) the total expenditures of the magnet school for the prior fiscal year, and (ii) the total per pupil state subsidy calculated under subsection (c) of this section plus any revenue from other sources. The commissioner may conduct a comprehensive financial review of the operating budget of a magnet school to verify such tuition rate.

Sec. 7. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2024*) In determining the rights and benefits earned by a teacher under sections 10-151 and 10-156 of the general statutes, employment in a school operated by Goodwin University Magnet Schools, Inc. or Goodwin University Educational

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Services, Inc. shall not be deemed to interrupt the continuous employment of a teacher who was employed by a local or regional board of education during the school year immediately prior to employment in such school and such teacher shall continue as an employee of Goodwin University Magnet Schools, Inc. or Goodwin University Educational Services, Inc., subject to the provisions of section 10-151 of the general statutes.

Sec. 8. Section 10-264o of the 2024 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

(a) Notwithstanding any provision of this chapter, interdistrict magnet schools that begin operations on or after July 1, 2008, pursuant to the decision in *Sheff v. O'Neill*, 238 Conn. 1 (1996), or any related stipulation or order in effect, as determined by the Commissioner of Education, may operate without district participation agreements and enroll students from any district through a lottery designated by the commissioner.

(b) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013, and each fiscal year thereafter, any tuition charged to a local or regional board of education by a regional educational service center or by Goodwin University Magnet Schools operating an interdistrict magnet school assisting the state in meeting its obligations pursuant to the decision in *Sheff v. O'Neill*, 238 Conn. 1 (1996), or any related stipulation or order in effect, as determined by the Commissioner of Education, for any student enrolled in kindergarten to grade twelve, inclusive, in such interdistrict magnet school shall be in an amount equal to the difference between (1) the average per pupil expenditure of the magnet school for the prior fiscal year, and (2) the amount of any per pupil state subsidy calculated under subsection (c) of section 10-264l, plus any revenue from other sources calculated on a per pupil basis, except for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, and each fiscal year thereafter, the per student tuition

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charged to a local or regional board of education shall not exceed fifty-eight per cent the per student tuition charged during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024. If any such board of education fails to pay such tuition, the commissioner may withhold from such board's town or towns a sum payable under section 10-262i in an amount not to exceed the amount of the unpaid tuition to the magnet school and pay such money to the fiscal agent for the magnet school as a supplementary grant for the operation of the interdistrict magnet school program. In no case shall the sum of such tuitions exceed the difference between (A) the total expenditures of the magnet school for the prior fiscal year, and (B) the total per pupil state subsidy calculated under subsection (c) of section 10-264l, plus any revenue from other sources. The commissioner may conduct a comprehensive review of the operating budget of a magnet school to verify such tuition rate.

(c) (1) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013, a regional educational service center operating an interdistrict magnet school assisting the state in meeting its obligations pursuant to the decision in *Sheff v. O'Neill*, 238 Conn. 1 (1996), or any related stipulation or order in effect, as determined by the Commissioner of Education, and offering a preschool program shall not charge tuition for a child enrolled in such preschool program.

(2) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2014, a regional educational service center operating an interdistrict magnet school assisting the state in meeting its obligations pursuant to the decision in *Sheff v. O'Neill*, 238 Conn. 1 (1996), or any related stipulation or order in effect, as determined by the Commissioner of Education, and offering a preschool program may charge tuition to the Department of Education for a child enrolled in such preschool program in an amount not to exceed an amount equal to the difference between (A) the average per pupil expenditure of the preschool program offered at the magnet school for the prior fiscal year, and (B) the amount of any per pupil state subsidy

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calculated under subsection (c) of section 10-264l, plus any revenue from other sources calculated on a per pupil basis. The commissioner may conduct a comprehensive review of the operating budget of any such magnet school charging such tuition to verify such tuition rate.

(3) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2015, a regional educational service center operating an interdistrict magnet school assisting the state in meeting its obligations pursuant to the decision in *Sheff v. O'Neill*, 238 Conn. 1 (1996), or any related stipulation or order in effect, as determined by the Commissioner of Education, and offering a preschool program may charge tuition to the parent or guardian of a child enrolled in such preschool program in an amount that is in accordance with the sliding tuition scale adopted by the State Board of Education pursuant to section 10-264p. The Department of Education shall be financially responsible for any unpaid portion of the tuition not charged to such parent or guardian under such sliding tuition scale. Such tuition shall not exceed an amount equal to the difference between (A) the average per pupil expenditure of the preschool program offered at the magnet school for the prior fiscal year, and (B) the amount of any per pupil state subsidy calculated under subsection (c) of section 10-264l, plus any revenue from other sources calculated on a per pupil basis. The commissioner may conduct a comprehensive review of the operating budget of any such magnet school charging such tuition to verify such tuition rate.

(4) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016, and each fiscal year thereafter, a regional educational service center or Goodwin University Magnet Schools operating an interdistrict magnet school assisting the state in meeting its obligations pursuant to the decision in *Sheff v. O'Neill*, 238 Conn. 1 (1996), or any related stipulation or order in effect, as determined by the Commissioner of Education, and offering a preschool program shall charge tuition to the parent or guardian of a child enrolled in such preschool program in an amount up to four

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thousand fifty-three dollars, except such regional educational service center or Goodwin University Magnet Schools shall not charge tuition to such parent or guardian with a family income at or below seventy-five per cent of the state median income. The Department of Education shall, within available appropriations, be financially responsible for any unpaid tuition charged to such parent or guardian with a family income at or below seventy-five per cent of the state median income. The commissioner may conduct a comprehensive financial review of the operating budget of any such magnet school charging such tuition to verify such tuition rate.

Sec. 9. Subsections (a) and (b) of section 10-264l of the 2024 supplement to the general statutes are repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

(a) The Department of Education shall, within available appropriations, establish a grant program (1) to assist (A) local and regional boards of education, (B) regional educational service centers, (C) the Board of Trustees of the Community-Technical Colleges on behalf of Quinebaug Valley Community College and Three Rivers Community College, and (D) cooperative arrangements pursuant to section 10-158a, and (2) in assisting the state in meeting its obligations pursuant to the decision in *Sheff v. O'Neill*, 238 Conn. 1 (1996), or any related stipulation or order in effect, as determined by the commissioner, to assist (A) the Board of Trustees of the Community-Technical Colleges on behalf of a regional community-technical college, (B) the Board of Trustees of the Connecticut State University System on behalf of a state university, (C) the Board of Trustees of The University of Connecticut on behalf of the university, (D) the board of governors for an independent institution of higher education, as defined in subsection (a) of section 10a-173, or the equivalent of such a board, on behalf of the independent institution of higher education, and (E) any other third-party not-for-profit corporation approved by the

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commissioner with the operation of interdistrict magnet school programs. All interdistrict magnet schools shall be operated in conformance with the same laws and regulations applicable to public schools. For the purposes of this section "an interdistrict magnet school program" means a program which (i) supports racial, ethnic and economic diversity, (ii) offers a special and high quality curriculum, and (iii) requires students who are enrolled to attend at least half-time. An interdistrict magnet school program does not include a regional agricultural science and technology school, a technical education and career school or a regional special education center. For the school year commencing July 1, 2017, and each school year thereafter, the governing authority for each interdistrict magnet school program shall (I) restrict the number of students that may enroll in the school from a participating district to seventy-five per cent of the total school enrollment, and (II) maintain a total school enrollment that is in accordance with the [reduced-isolation setting] enrollment standards for interdistrict magnet school programs, developed by the Commissioner of Education pursuant to section 10-264r, as amended by this act.

(b) (1) Applications for interdistrict magnet school program operating grants awarded pursuant to this section shall be submitted annually to the Commissioner of Education at such time and in such manner as the commissioner prescribes, except that on and after July 1, 2009, applications for such operating grants for new interdistrict magnet schools, other than those that the commissioner determines will assist the state in meeting its obligations pursuant to the decision in *Sheff v. O'Neill*, 238 Conn. 1 (1996), or any related stipulation or order in effect, as determined by the commissioner, shall not be accepted until the commissioner develops a comprehensive state-wide interdistrict magnet school plan. The commissioner shall submit such comprehensive state-wide interdistrict magnet school plan on or before October 1, 2016, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education and

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appropriations.

(2) In determining whether an application shall be approved and funds awarded pursuant to this section, the commissioner shall consider, but such consideration shall not be limited to: (A) Whether the program offered by the school is likely to increase student achievement; (B) whether the program is likely to reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation; (C) the percentage of the student enrollment in the program from each participating district; and (D) the proposed operating budget and the sources of funding for the interdistrict magnet school. For a magnet school not operated by a local or regional board of education, the commissioner shall only approve a proposed operating budget that, on a per pupil basis, does not exceed the maximum allowable threshold established in accordance with this subdivision. The maximum allowable threshold shall be an amount equal to one hundred twenty per cent of the state average of the quotient obtained by dividing net current expenditures, as defined in section 10-261, by average daily membership, as defined in said section, for the fiscal year two years prior to the fiscal year for which the operating grant is requested. The Department of Education shall establish the maximum allowable threshold no later than December fifteenth of the fiscal year prior to the fiscal year for which the operating grant is requested. If requested by an applicant that is not a local or regional board of education, the commissioner may approve a proposed operating budget that exceeds the maximum allowable threshold if the commissioner determines that there are extraordinary programmatic needs. For the fiscal years ending June 30, 2017, [June 30, 2018, June 30, 2020, and June 30, 2021] to June 30, 2025, inclusive, in the case of an interdistrict magnet school that will assist the state in meeting its obligations pursuant to the decision in *Sheff v. O'Neill*, 238 Conn. 1 (1996), or any related stipulation or order in effect, as determined by the commissioner, the commissioner shall also consider whether the school is meeting the [reduced-isolation setting] enrollment standards for interdistrict magnet school programs,

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developed by the commissioner pursuant to section 10-264r, as amended by this act. If such school has not met such [reduced-isolation setting] enrollment standards, it shall not be entitled to receive a grant pursuant to this section unless the commissioner finds that it is appropriate to award a grant for an additional year or years and approves a plan to bring such school into compliance with such [reduced-isolation setting] enrollment standards. If requested by the commissioner, the applicant shall meet with the commissioner or the commissioner's designee to discuss the budget and sources of funding.

(3) For the fiscal years ending June 30, 2018, to June 30, 2025, inclusive, the commissioner shall not award a grant to an interdistrict magnet school program that (A) has more than seventy-five per cent of the total school enrollment from one school district, or (B) does not maintain a total school enrollment that is in accordance with the [reduced-isolation setting] enrollment standards for interdistrict magnet school programs, developed by the Commissioner of Education pursuant to section 10-264r, as amended by this act, except the commissioner may award a grant to such school for an additional year or years if the commissioner finds it is appropriate to do so and approves a plan to bring such school into compliance with such residency or [reduced-isolation setting] enrollment standards.

(4) For the fiscal years ending June 30, 2018, to [June 30, 2021] June 30, 2025, inclusive, if an interdistrict magnet school program does not maintain a total school enrollment that is in accordance with the [reduced-isolation setting] enrollment standards for interdistrict magnet school programs, developed by the commissioner pursuant to section 10-264r, as amended by this act, for two or more consecutive years, the commissioner may impose a financial penalty on the operator of such interdistrict magnet school program, or take any other measure, in consultation with such operator, as may be appropriate to assist such operator in complying with such [reduced-isolation setting] enrollment

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standards.

Sec. 10. Section 10-264r of the 2024 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

Not later than July 1, 2017, the Commissioner of Education shall develop, and revise as necessary thereafter, reduced-isolation enrollment standards for interdistrict magnet school programs that shall serve as the enrollment requirements for purposes of section 10-264l, as amended by this act. Such standards shall (1) comply with the decision of *Sheff v. O'Neill*, 238 Conn. 1 (1996), or any related stipulation or order in effect, for an interdistrict magnet school program located in the Sheff region, as defined in subsection (k) of section 10-264l, as amended by this act, (2) define the term "reduced-isolation student" for purposes of the standards, (3) establish a requirement for the minimum percentage of reduced-isolation students that can be enrolled in an interdistrict magnet school program, provided such minimum percentage is not less than twenty per cent of the total school enrollment, (4) allow an interdistrict magnet school program to have a total school enrollment of reduced-isolation students that is not more than one per cent below the minimum percentage established by the commissioner, provided the commissioner approves a plan that is designed to bring the number of reduced-isolation students of such interdistrict magnet school program into compliance with the minimum percentage, and (5) for the school year commencing July 1, 2018, authorize the commissioner to establish on or before May 1, 2018, and revise as necessary thereafter, an alternative reduced-isolation student enrollment percentage for an interdistrict magnet school program located in the Sheff region, provided the commissioner (A) determines that such alternative (i) increases opportunities for students who are residents of Hartford to access an educational setting with reduced racial isolation or other categories of diversity, including, but not limited to, geography,

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socioeconomic status, special education, multilingual learners and academic achievement, (ii) complies with the decision of *Sheff v. O'Neill*, 238 Conn. 1 (1996), or any related stipulation or order in effect, and (B) approves a plan for such interdistrict magnet school program that is designed to bring the number of reduced-isolation students of such interdistrict magnet school program into compliance with such alternative or the minimum percentage described in subdivision (2) of this section. Not later than May 1, 2018, the commissioner shall submit a report on each alternative reduced-isolation student enrollment percentage established, pursuant to subdivision (4) of this section, for an interdistrict magnet school program located in the Sheff region to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a. The reduced-isolation [setting] enrollment standards for interdistrict magnet school programs shall not be deemed to be regulations, as defined in section 4-166.

Sec. 11. Subsection (b) of section 22-38d of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

(b) The Department of Education, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture, school food service directors and interested farming organizations, shall (1) establish a week-long promotional event, to be known as Connecticut-Grown for Connecticut Kids Week, in late September or early October each year, that will promote Connecticut agriculture and foods to children through school meal and classroom programs, at farms, farmers' markets and other locations in the community, (2) encourage and solicit school districts, individual schools and other educational institutions under its jurisdiction to purchase Connecticut-grown farm products, (3) provide outreach, guidance and training to districts, parent and teacher organizations, schools and school food service directors concerning the value of and

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procedure for purchasing and incorporating into their regular menus Connecticut-grown farm products, (4) in consultation with the Department of Agriculture, arrange for local, regional and state-wide events where potential purchasers and farmers can interact, and (5) provide technical assistance and support for schools to arrange for interaction between students and farmers, including field trips to farms and in-school presentations by farmers.

Sec. 12. Subsections (a) and (b) of section 10-74o of the 2024 supplement to the general statutes are repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

(a) As used in this section and sections 10-74q and 10-74r, as amended by this act:

(1) "Transition service" [means a service for a student who requires special education that facilitates the student's transition from school to postsecondary activities such as postsecondary education and training, employment or independent living] has the same meaning as provided in 34 CFR 300.43, as amended from time to time;

(2) "Transition resources" means sources of information, counseling or training concerning transition services or programs;

(3) ["Public transition program"] "Transition program" means a program [operated by a local or regional board of education or a regional educational service center] to provide transition services as recommended by the planning and placement team for a student who requires special education and is eighteen to twenty-two years of age, inclusive, based on the goals set forth in such student's individualized education program; and

(4) "Transition coordinator" means a director of pupil personnel or other person employed by a local or regional board of education, as designated by such director, who assists parents and students in the

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school district governed by such board navigate the transition resources, transition services and [public] transition programs operated by a local or regional board of education or a regional educational service center available for such students.

(b) The Department of Education shall employ a State-wide Transition Services Coordinator within the Bureau of Special Education. The State-wide Transition Services Coordinator shall (1) coordinate the provision of transition resources, transition services and [public] transition programs operated by a local or regional board of education or a regional educational service center throughout the state in collaboration with the liaisons appointed by other state agencies pursuant to section 10-74m, as amended by this act, (2) establish minimum standards for [public] transition programs operated by a local or regional board of education or a regional educational service center and metrics for measuring such standards, (3) perform [unannounced] site visits of [public] transition programs operated by a local or regional board of education or a regional educational service center for the purpose of determining the effectiveness of and suggesting improvements to such programs and post data on the department's Internet web site related to how such [public] transition program measured against the minimum standards established pursuant to subdivision (2) of this subsection, except the State-wide Transition Services Coordinator or the Department of Education may perform any necessary unannounced site visit of such transition programs in addition to the site visits described in this subdivision, (4) develop and make available on the department's Internet web site a course for educators and school staff who do not provide transition services to inform such educators and staff about transition services and programs, including, but not limited to, about the purpose, essential programming and deadlines of such programs, (5) establish minimum standards for the training of transition coordinators and maintain a record of each transition coordinator completing the training program developed by

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the Department of Education pursuant to section 10-74r, as amended by this act, and (6) establish best practices for the provision of transition services and distribute such best practices to each transition coordinator.

Sec. 13. Section 10-74m of the 2024 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

(a) The Department of Education shall enter into memoranda of understanding with the Office of Early Childhood and the Departments of Developmental Services, Aging and Disability Services, Children and Families, Social Services and Correction regarding the provision of special education and related services to children, including, but not limited to, education, health care, transition resources, transition services and [public] transition programs, as those terms are defined in section 10-74o, as amended by this act. Such memoranda of understanding shall account for current programs and services, utilize best practices and be updated or renewed at least every five years.

(b) The Office of Early Childhood and the Departments of Developmental Services, Aging and Disability Services, Children and Families, Social Services and Correction shall, as necessary, enter into memoranda of understanding regarding the provision of special education and related services to children as such services relate to one another. Such memoranda of understanding shall account for current programs and services, utilize best practices and be updated or renewed at least every five years.

(c) The Office of Early Childhood and the Departments of Developmental Services, Aging and Disability Services, Children and Families, the Labor Department, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Public Health, Social Services and Correction shall each appoint an employee to act as a liaison to the Department of Education's State-wide Transition Services Coordinator, established pursuant to section 10-74o,

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as amended by this act. Each liaison shall provide information and advice to such coordinator concerning the transition resources, transition services and [public] transition programs provided by the agency such liaison represents.

Sec. 14. Subsection (a) of section 10-74n of the 2024 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

(a) The [State Education Resource Center, established pursuant to section 10-357a] Department of Education's State-wide Transition Services Coordinator, established pursuant to section 10-74o, as amended by this act, in collaboration with the [Departments of Education, Developmental Services, Social Services and Aging and Disability Services and the Offices of Workforce Strategy and Policy and Management] liaisons appointed by other state agencies pursuant to section 10-74m, as amended by this act, shall: (1) Develop and maintain an easily accessible and navigable online listing of the transition resources, transition services and [public] transition programs, as those terms are defined in section 10-74o, as amended by this act, provided by each such [center, department or office] state agency, including, but not limited to, for each resource, service and program (A) a plain language description, (B) eligibility requirements, and (C) application deadlines and instructions, and (2) annually collect information related to transition resources, programs and services provided by other state agencies. The Departments of Aging and Disability Services, Developmental Services, [and] Social Services, Children and Families, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Public Health and Correction, the Labor Department and the Office of [Policy and Management] Early Childhood shall each post a link to such online listing on an easily accessible location of said departments' Internet web sites.

Sec. 15. Subsection (a) of section 10-74r of the 2024 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu

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thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

(a) Not later than January 1, 2024, each local and regional board of education shall ensure that a transition coordinator has been designated, who may be the director of pupil personnel or another employee of such board appointed as transition coordinator by such director. Each transition coordinator shall (1) complete the training program developed by the Department of Education pursuant to subsection (a) of section 10-74q, provided (A) each transition coordinator appointed prior to the date upon which the training program commences shall complete such training program during the three-year period immediately following such date, and (B) each new transition coordinator appointed after such date shall complete such training program not later than one year after being appointed, and (2) ensure that parents of students requiring special education receive information concerning transition resources, transition services or [public] transition programs in accordance with section 10-74n, as amended by this act, and are aware of the eligibility requirements and application details of such resources, services and programs that specifically apply to such student.

Sec. 16. Subparagraph (B) of subdivision (9) of subsection (a) of section 10-76d of the 2024 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

(B) At the first planning and placement team meeting when a child reaches the age of fourteen and has a statement of transition service needs included in such child's individualized education program pursuant to subparagraph (A) of this subdivision, the planning and placement team shall, for each [public] transition program, as defined in section 10-74o, as amended by this act, operated by the local or regional board of education or the regional educational service center where the board is located and each program for [adults] adult services for which such child may be eligible after graduation, (i) upon the

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approval of the parent or guardian of such child, or a surrogate parent of such child appointed pursuant to section 10-94g, or such child if such child is an emancipated minor, notify the state agency that provides such program about the potential eligibility of such child, and (ii) provide such parent, guardian, surrogate parent or child a listing of such programs that includes, but is not limited to, (I) a plain language description of such program, (II) eligibility requirements for such program, and (III) deadlines and instructions for applications for such programs.

Sec. 17. Subsection (b) of section 10-95i of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

(b) During the five-year period beginning January 1, 2020, and during each five-year period thereafter, the board shall evaluate each existing technical education and career school trade program in accordance with a schedule which the board shall establish. A trade program may be reauthorized for a period of not more than five years following each evaluation on the basis of: The projected employment demand for students enrolled in the trade program, including consideration of the employment of graduates of the program during the preceding five years; anticipated technological changes; the availability of qualified instructors; the existence of similar programs at other educational institutions; and student interest in the trade program. As part of the evaluation, the board shall consider geographic differences that may make a trade program feasible at one school and not another and whether certain combinations of program offerings shall be required. Prior to any final decision on the reauthorization of a trade program, the board shall consult with the [craft] program advisory committees for the trade program being evaluated.

Sec. 18. Section 10-95j of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

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The Technical Education and Career System board shall include in the report required pursuant to section 10-95k, a summary of the following:

- (1) Admissions policies for the Technical Education and Career System;
- (2) Recruitment and retention of faculty;
- (3) Efforts to strengthen consideration of the needs of and to develop greater public awareness of the Technical Education and Career System; and
- (4) Efforts to strengthen the role of [career and technical education] program advisory committees and increase employer participation.

Sec. 19. Section 10-96c of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

The executive director of the Technical Education and Career System may indemnify and hold harmless any person, as defined in section 1-79, who makes a gift of tangible property or properties with a fair market value in excess of one thousand dollars to the Technical Education and Career System for instructional purposes. Any indemnification under this section shall be solely for any damages caused as a result of the use of such tangible property, provided there shall be no indemnification for any liability resulting from (1) intentional or wilful misconduct by the person providing such tangible property to [the department or] the Technical Education and Career System, or (2) hidden defects in such tangible property that are known to and not disclosed by the person providing such tangible property to [the department or] the Technical Education and Career System at the time the gift is made.

Sec. 20. Section 10-66p of the general statutes is repealed and the

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following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

(a) Notwithstanding the provisions of sections 4-98, 4-212 to 4-219, inclusive, 4a-51 and 4a-57, the Commissioner of Education may allocate funds to allow regional educational service centers and state education organizations to provide professional development services, technical assistance and evaluation activities to local and regional boards of education, state charter schools, technical education and career schools, school readiness providers and other educational entities, as determined by the commissioner. Regional educational service centers and state education organizations shall expend such funds in accordance with procedures and conditions prescribed by the commissioner. For purposes of this [section] subsection, state education organizations may include, but not be limited to, organizations or associations representing superintendents, boards of education and elementary and secondary schools.

(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of sections 4-98, 4-212 to 4-219, inclusive, 4a-51 and 4a-57, the executive director of the Technical Education and Career System may allocate funds to allow regional educational service centers to provide professional development services, technical assistance, special education services and evaluation activities to technical education and career schools, as determined by the executive director. Regional educational service centers shall expend such funds in accordance with procedures and conditions prescribed by the executive director.

Sec. 21. Section 10-95 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

There is established a state-wide system of technical education and career schools to be known as the Technical Education and Career System. The Technical Education and Career System shall offer (1) full-time comprehensive secondary education at technical high schools

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located throughout the state, and [may offer] (2) part-time, [and] evening [,] and extracurricular programs in vocational, technical, technological and postsecondary education and training.

Sec. 22. Section 10-95p of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

(a) There is established a division of postsecondary educational programs within the Technical Education and Career System. The division shall administer any postsecondary educational program that (1) was offered at a technical education and career school during the school year commencing July 1, 2016, or (2) is approved by the Technical Education and Career System board. [on or after July 5, 2017.]

(b) Any student admitted for enrollment in a postsecondary educational program administered by the division shall have a high school diploma or its equivalent, or [be twenty-one years of age or older] have completed the school year in which such student reaches twenty-two years of age.

Sec. 23. Section 10-76q of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

(a) The Technical Education and Career System, established pursuant to section 10-95, as amended by this act, shall: (1) Provide the professional services necessary to identify, in accordance with section 10-76a, children requiring special education who are enrolled at a technical education and career school; (2) identify each such child; (3) determine the appropriateness of the technical education and career school for the educational needs of each such child; (4) provide an appropriate educational program for each such child, including, but not limited to, providing and funding transition programs, as defined in section 10-74o, as amended by this act; (5) maintain a record thereof; and (6) annually evaluate the progress and accomplishments of special

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education programs provided by the Technical Education and Career System.

(b) Where it is deemed appropriate that a child enrolled in a technical education and career school receive special education, the parents or guardian of such child shall have a right to the hearing and appeal process as provided for in section 10-76h.

(c) Prior to a student's enrollment in a technical education and career school, the local or regional board of education for the town in which such student resides shall convene a planning and placement team meeting, except the planning and placement team meeting for a student who has been educated in a home shall be convened by the Technical Education and Career System. The purpose of such meeting shall be to address such student's transition to such technical education and career school and ensure that such student's individualized education program reflects the current supports and services that such student requires in order to access a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. A representative from such technical education and career school shall be invited to such meeting.

Sec. 24. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) As used in this section and sections 25 to 32, inclusive, of this act:

(1) "Accredited" means an early care and education program (A) accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, National Association for Family Child Care or other nationally recognized accreditations or certifications as approved by the commissioner, or (B) that has received Early Head Start or Head Start federal approval;

(2) "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Early Childhood; and

(3) "Office" means the Office of Early Childhood.

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Sec. 25. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) The Office of Early Childhood shall operate and administer Early Start CT in order to provide state funding to early care and education programs throughout the state and coordinate and facilitate the efficient delivery of such early care and education programs for eligible children. Under Early Start CT, the office shall:

(1) Provide open access for infants and toddlers and preschool-age children to high-quality early care and education programs that promote the health and safety of children and prepare them for school;

(2) Provide opportunities for parents to choose among affordable and accredited early care and education programs;

(3) Encourage coordination and cooperation among early care and education programs and prevent the duplication of services;

(4) Identify the specific service needs and unique resources available to particular municipalities;

(5) Prevent or minimize the potential for developmental delay in children prior to their reaching the age of five;

(6) Strengthen the family through: (A) Encouragement of family engagement and partnership in a child's development and education, and (B) enhancement of a family's capacity to meet the special needs of the children, including children with disabilities;

(7) Reduce educational costs by decreasing the need for special education services for school-age children;

(8) Assure that children with disabilities are integrated into early care and education programs available to children who do not have disabilities;

(9) Improve the availability and quality of Early Start CT programs

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and their coordination with the services of child care providers;

(10) Facilitate the racial, ethnic and socioeconomic diversity of the children, families and staff in early care and education programs; and

(11) Maximize local and federal early care and education funding to expand capacity and access.

Sec. 26. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) As part of Early Start CT, the state, acting by and in the discretion of the Commissioner of Early Childhood, may enter into direct or third-party contracts to provide financial assistance to municipalities, local and regional boards of education, regional educational service centers, family resource centers, Head Start programs, preschool programs, nonprofit organizations, child care centers, group child care homes, family child care homes, as such terms are described in section 19a-77 of the general statutes, and any other programs that meet standards established by the commissioner for the purpose of operating early care and education programs that focus on providing early childhood services based on economic, social or environmental conditions, including in regions with insufficient access to child care. At least sixty per cent of the eligible children enrolled in an early care and education program receiving financial assistance under Early Start CT shall be members of a family that is at or below seventy-five per cent of the state median income. No such financial assistance shall be available to (1) any such child care center, group child care home or family child care home unless such center or home has been licensed by the Commissioner of Early Childhood pursuant to section 19a-80 or 19a-87b of the general statutes, as amended by this act, or (2) any such local or regional board of education or regional educational service center unless the preschool program is approved by the Department of Education. The commissioner shall ensure that the majority of such early care and education programs receiving such financial assistance shall serve children that reside in or attend early care and education programs

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located in priority school districts pursuant to section 10-266p of the general statutes, former priority school districts or towns with schools deemed severe need schools because forty per cent or more of the lunches served are served to students who are eligible for free or reduced price lunches pursuant to federal law. In determining whether to enter into a contract for financial assistance under this section, the commissioner may consider (A) a community's participation in the state's subsidized child care subsidy program established pursuant to section 17b-749 of the general statutes, and (B) the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's social vulnerability index determined by census tract.

(b) Any contract for financial assistance entered into under this section shall be contingent upon available funding and a successful application submitted to the office and which has been informed by the appropriate local or regional governance partner's needs assessment and community plan, as described in section 27 of this act.

(c) The office, in operating and administering Early Start CT, may allocate an amount up to ten per cent of the total financial assistance under the contract with each local or regional governance partner established pursuant to section 27 of this act, but not more than one hundred fifty thousand dollars, for coordination, program evaluation and administration. Such amount shall be increased by an amount equal to local funding provided for early childhood education coordination, program evaluation and administration, not to exceed fifty thousand dollars. Each local or regional governance partner shall designate a staff person to be responsible for such coordination, program evaluation and administration and to act as a liaison between the town or towns and the commissioner.

(d) Any early care and education program receiving financial assistance under Early Start CT shall not discriminate based on ancestry, race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual

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orientation, religion, learning, physical, intellectual or mental disability or any other protected class described in chapter 814c of the general statutes.

(e) No financial assistance received as part of Early Start CT under this section shall be used to supplant federal, state or local funding received for early care and education on behalf of children in an early care and education program.

(f) (1) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026, the office may pay, in an individual contract entered into under this section, a per-child rate or an amount per classroom that has been determined by the commissioner. (A) The per-child rate paid by the office under this section for each eligible child enrolled in a program under Early Start CT who is three or four years of age and each child who is five years of age and not eligible to enroll in school, pursuant to section 10-15c of the general statutes, shall be at least ten thousand five hundred dollars for each such child. The amount per classroom for such children described in this subparagraph shall be at an equivalent rate per child multiplied by the total capacity of the classroom as determined by the commissioner on a case by case basis and established in the contract. (B) The per-child rate paid by the office under this section for each eligible child enrolled in a program under Early Start CT who is under the age of three and enrolled in an infant or toddler classroom and not in a preschool classroom shall be at least thirteen thousand five hundred dollars for each such child. The amount per classroom for such children described in this subparagraph shall be at an equivalent rate per child multiplied by the total capacity of the classroom as determined by the commissioner on a case by case basis and established in the contract.

(2) For purposes of implementing the provisions of this subsection, the commissioner shall develop policies and procedures governing classroom sizes, payments and required enrollment rates. The commissioner shall use data-driven, outcomes-based contract

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provisions to facilitate and incentivize full enrollment.

(g) The office may use up to three per cent of funds allocated to the early care and education appropriation to evaluate program effectiveness and impact on participating children, families and programs, including, but not limited to, child outcomes, later school performance, quality standards, professional development and preparation, and parent engagement impact.

(h) Any Early Start CT facility that has been approved to operate an early care or education program financed through the Connecticut Health and Education Facilities Authority and has received a commitment for debt service from the Department of Social Services, pursuant to section 17b-749i of the general statutes, on or before June 30, 2014, and on or after July 1, 2014, from the office shall be exempt from the requirement for issuance of requests for proposals.

Sec. 27. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) There shall be established, within available appropriations, local or regional governance partners to assist in the provision of early care and education in a community under Early Start CT. A town or school district and appropriate representatives of groups or entities interested in early care and education in such town or school district may establish a local governance partner. Two or more towns or school districts and appropriate representatives of groups or entities interested in early care and education in a region may establish a regional governance partner.

(b) The membership of each local or regional governance partner shall reflect the racial, ethnic and socioeconomic composition of the town or region it serves and consist of early care and education stakeholders, including, but not limited to, elected and appointed officials, parents, representatives with expertise in early care and education, a representative, where applicable, of Smart Start established pursuant to section 10-506 of the general statutes, as amended by this

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act, local education and healthcare providers in the community, a local homeless education liaison, community representatives from a workforce or job training entity and other community representatives who provide services to children.

(c) The role and responsibilities of a local or regional governance partner shall include, but are not limited to, (1) conducting and administering a data-driven needs assessment for its respective community or region in accordance with the provisions of subsection (d) of this section, (2) employing strategies to solicit parental engagement and membership, (3) providing periodic technical assistance regarding best practices in early care and education and family engagement for its town or region, (4) jointly sponsoring with the office, professional development opportunities, and (5) ensuring that community outreach is regularly conducted and maintained with community stakeholders.

(d) Each local or regional governance partner shall, within available appropriations, conduct a data-driven needs assessment for the town or region in which such partner serves. Such needs assessment may include recommendations for the preferred distribution and allocation of child care spaces within such partner's respective town or region, and, subject to the office's approval, may include a data-driven methodology to reassign child care spaces before the contract date has lapsed. Such needs assessment shall be created by the office in collaboration with communities and shall directly inform, among other things, the assignment of child care spaces across a mixed-delivery system, including, but not limited to, licensed family child care homes, group child care homes, child care centers and license-exempt public schools.

(e) Each local or regional governance partner shall employ a staff liaison to aid and support the local or regional governance partner in implementing the provisions of this section. Each staff liaison shall ensure (1) that partnerships are established and fostered among child

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care providers, (2) that cooperation is maintained with the Office of Early Childhood in monitoring and evaluating early care and education programs, (3) that existing and potential resources and services available to children and families are identified, (4) facilitation and coordination of efficient, data-driven, delivery of services to children and families, including (A) referral procedures, and (B) before and after school child care for children attending school day, school year programs, (5) the exchange of information with other community organizations serving the needs of children and families, (6) that recommendations are made to school officials concerning transition from child care programs to preschool programs and kindergarten, (7) that effective community engagement strategies are employed to ensure diverse participation, (8) that biannual child assessments, approved by the office, are performed at programs, and conducted in partnership with families, and (9) collaboration with the office related to planning improvements to the state early care and education governance structure.

(f) The office shall monitor each local or regional governance partner to ensure compliance with the provisions of this section.

Sec. 28. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) The Office of Early Childhood shall establish a sliding fee scale for families that are enrolled in an early care and education program under Early Start CT. Such sliding scale shall be based on family income and be consistent with the sliding fee scale used in the child care subsidy program described in section 17b-249 of the general statutes.

Sec. 29. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) Except as otherwise provided in subsection (b) of this section, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, and each fiscal year thereafter, if funds appropriated to the Office of Early Childhood for Early Start CT are not expended by the Commissioner of Early Childhood, an amount up to two million dollars of such unexpended funds may be available (1) for the provision of

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professional development for early care and education program providers, and staff employed in such programs, provided such programs are receiving financial assistance under Early Start CT for infant, toddler and preschool slots, or (2) to support early care and education programs in satisfying the designated qualified staff member requirements described in section 31 of this act, provided such programs receive financial assistance under Early Start CT. The commissioner shall determine how such unexpended funds shall be distributed.

(b) If any unexpended funds described in subsection (a) of this section are not expended by the office under said subsection, the commissioner, with the consent of the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, may use such unexpended funds to provide support for purposes that include, but are not limited to, (1) assisting early care and education programs in meeting and maintaining accreditation requirements, (2) providing training in implementing preschool assessments and curricula, including training to enhance literacy teaching skills, (3) developing and implementing best practices for parents in supporting preschool and kindergarten student learning, (4) developing and implementing strategies for children to successfully transition to preschool and from preschool to kindergarten, including through parental engagement and whole-family supports that may be utilized through the two-generational initiative, established pursuant to section 17b-112l of the general statutes, or through other available resources, and (5) providing for professional development.

Sec. 30. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) Any early care and education program receiving financial assistance under Early Start CT, including, but not limited to, licensed family child care homes, group child care homes, child care centers and other licensed exempt child care providers and settings, shall be accredited not later than three years after entering into a contract with the Office of Early Childhood under Early Start CT pursuant to section 26 of this act. Any such program that is not

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accredited shall have an approved program plan not later than twelve months after entering into a contract with the office.

Sec. 31. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) As used in this section:

(1) "Office of Early Childhood funded early care and education program" means an early care and education program that accepts state funds directly from the office or indirectly through office subcontractors, for any combination of infant, toddler, preschool and before and after school, but does not include the child care subsidy program established pursuant to section 17b-749 of the general statutes.

(2) "Designated staff member" means the person assigned the primary responsibility for a classroom of children in an Office of Early Childhood funded early care and education program.

(3) "Designated qualified staff member" means a designated staff member who possesses at least one of the following:

(A) A bachelor's degree or higher with a concentration in early childhood education from an institution of higher education that is (i) regionally accredited and accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, (ii) regionally accredited and working toward achieving accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children, or (iii) regionally accredited;

(B) A certificate issued pursuant to section 10-145b of the general statutes with an endorsement in early childhood education or early childhood special education;

(C) Deemed to meet the bachelor's degree requirements by the office without a concentration in early childhood education, but with at least twelve early childhood credits from an institution of higher education that is regionally accredited;

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(D) A bachelor's degree from an institution of higher education that is regionally accredited, without a concentration in early childhood education, but with at least twelve applicable early childhood credits as determined by the office;

(E) Permission from the office if such designated staff member is enrolled in an institution of higher education and engaged in and making progress in an early childhood planned program of study leading to an early childhood bachelor's degree.

(b) When a bachelor's degree designated qualified staff member is not assigned, a person may be deemed a designated qualified staff member if such person possesses at least one of the qualifications included in subsection (c) of this section and is under the supervision of an on-site bachelor's degree designated qualified staff member, except any family child care home provider that accepts state funds shall meet the designated qualified staff member qualifications.

(c) When a bachelor's degree designated qualified staff member supervises an associate degree designated qualified staff member, the person possessing a bachelor's degree may supervise such associate degree designated qualified staff member at an off-site location. The associate degree designated qualified staff member, under the supervision of a bachelor's degree qualified staff member, shall possess at least one of the following:

(1) An associate degree or higher with a concentration in early childhood education from an institution of higher education that is (i) regionally accredited and accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, (ii) regionally accredited and working toward achieving accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children, or (iii) regionally accredited;

(2) Deemed to meet the associate degree requirements by the office

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without a concentration in early childhood education, but with at least twelve early childhood credits from an institution of higher education that is regionally accredited;

(3) An associate degree from an institution of higher education that is regionally accredited, without a concentration in early childhood education, but with at least twelve applicable early childhood credits as determined by the office;

(4) Permission from the office if such associate degree designated qualified staff member is enrolled in an institution of higher education and engaged in an early childhood planned program of study leading to an early childhood associate degree.

(d) (1) From July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2027, inclusive, twenty-five per cent of the designated staff members at each Office of Early Childhood funded early childhood education program shall be designated qualified staff members meeting one of the criteria at the bachelor's degree level. If the Office of Early Childhood funded early care and education program is a family child care home, the designated qualified staff member for such family child care home shall have achieved or be working toward an early childhood associate degree or bachelor's degree.

(2) From July 1, 2027, to June 30, 2030, inclusive, fifty per cent of the designated qualified members at each Office of Early Childhood funded early childhood education program shall be designated qualified staff members meeting one of the criteria at the bachelor's degree level. If the Office of Early Childhood funded early care and education program is a family child care home, the designated qualified staff member for such family child care home shall have achieved or be working toward an early childhood associate degree or bachelor's degree.

(3) On and after July 1, 2030, sixty per cent of the designated qualified

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members at each Office of Early Childhood funded child care program shall be designated qualified staff members meeting one of the criteria at the bachelor's degree level. If the Office of Early Childhood funded early care and education program is a family child care home, the designated qualified staff member for such family child care home shall have achieved or be working toward an early childhood associate degree or bachelor's degree.

Sec. 32. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) As part of Early Start CT, the Commissioner of Early Childhood shall establish a state-funded competitive program in which contracts are entered into with nonprofit agencies and local and regional boards of education, which are federal Head Start grant recipients, to assist in (1) establishing extended-day and full-day, year-round, Head Start programs or expanding existing Head Start programs to extended-day or full-day, year-round programs, (2) enhancing program quality, (3) increasing the number of children served in those programs that are both Head Start and Early Head Start grant recipients or delegates, (4) increasing the number of Early Head Start children served above those who are federally funded, and (5) increasing the hours for children currently receiving Early Head Start services. Nonprofit agencies or boards of education seeking contracts pursuant to this section shall make application to the commissioner on such forms and at such times as the commissioner shall prescribe. The commissioner shall include contract provisions that mandate at least twenty-five per cent of the funding for such contracts shall be for the purpose of enhancing program quality. All contracts entered into under this section shall be funded within the limits of available appropriations or otherwise from federal funds and private donations. All Head Start programs funded pursuant to this section shall be in compliance with federal Head Start program performance standards.

Sec. 33. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Commissioner of Early

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Childhood shall implement policies and procedures necessary to (1) administer the provisions of sections 24 to 32, inclusive, of this act, (2) implement infant and toddler and school-age ratios and group size requirements, and (3) implement head teacher staffing requirements for programs that serve only school-age children, while in the process of adopting such policies and procedures in regulation form.

(b) Any existing regulations relating to infant and toddler and school-age ratios, group size requirements and head teacher staffing requirements for programs that serve only school-age children that are generally applicable to child care centers and group child care homes shall continue to be applicable to such centers and homes that serve infants and toddlers and school-age children until replaced and superseded by the policies and procedures described in this section.

(c) The commissioner shall post notice of the intent to adopt regulations on the department's Internet web site and the eRegulations System not later than twenty days after the date of implementation of such policies and procedures. Such policies and procedures shall be valid until the time final regulations are adopted.

Sec. 34. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2024*) Notwithstanding the provisions of sections 4-98, 4-212 to 4-219, inclusive, 4a-51 and 4a-57 of the general statutes, the Commissioner of Early Childhood may, within available appropriations, allocate funds to regional educational service centers for the provision of professional development services, technical assistance and evaluation and program planning and implementation activities, local and regional boards of education, child care centers, group child care homes and family child care homes, as such terms are described in section 19a-77 of the general statutes, and other early childhood care and education entities, as determined by the commissioner. Any funds allocated by the commissioner under this section shall be expended in accordance with procedures and conditions prescribed by the commissioner.

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Sec. 35. (*Effective July 1, 2024*) (a) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, the office may pay, in an individual contract entered into under sections 8-210, as amended by this act, and 10-16p of the general statutes, or a grant awarded pursuant to section 10-16n of the general statutes, as amended by this act, a per-child rate or an amount per classroom that has been determined by the commissioner. (1) The per-child rate paid by the office under this section for each eligible child enrolled in a program under Early Start CT who is three or four years of age and each child who is five years of age and not eligible to enroll in school, pursuant to section 10-15c of the general statutes, shall be at least ten thousand five hundred dollars for each such child. The amount per classroom for such children described in this subdivision shall be at an equivalent rate per child multiplied by the total capacity of the classroom as determined by the commissioner on a case by case basis and established in the contract. (2) The per-child rate paid by the office under this section for each eligible child enrolled in a program under Early Start CT who is under the age of three and enrolled in an infant or toddler classroom and not in a preschool classroom shall be at least thirteen thousand five hundred dollars for each such child. The amount per classroom for such children described in this subdivision shall be at an equivalent rate per child multiplied by the total capacity of the classroom as determined by the commissioner on a case by case basis and established in the contract.

(b) For purposes of implementing the provisions of this section, the commissioner shall develop policies and procedures governing classroom sizes, payments and required enrollment rates. The commissioner shall use data-driven, outcomes-based contract provisions to facilitate and incentivize full enrollment.

Sec. 36. Subsection (b) of section 8-210 of the 2024 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

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(b) The state, acting by and in the discretion of the Commissioner of Early Childhood, may enter into a contract with a municipality, a group child care home or family child care home, as described in section 19a-77, a human resource development agency or a nonprofit corporation for state financial assistance in developing and operating child care centers, group child care homes and family child care homes for children disadvantaged by reasons of economic, social or environmental conditions, provided no such financial assistance shall be available for the operating costs of any such child care center, group child care home or family child care home unless it has been licensed by the Commissioner of Early Childhood pursuant to section 19a-80. Such financial assistance shall be available for a program of a municipality, of a group child care home or family child care home, of a human resource development agency or of a nonprofit corporation which may provide for personnel, equipment, supplies, activities, program materials and renovation and remodeling of the physical facilities of such child care centers, group child care homes or family child care homes. Such contract shall provide for state financial assistance, within available appropriations, in the form of a state grant-in-aid (1) for a portion of the cost of such program, as determined by the Commissioner of Early Childhood, if not federally assisted, (2) equal to one-half of the amount by which the net cost of such program, as approved by the Commissioner of Early Childhood, exceeds the federal grant-in-aid thereof, or (3) (A) for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, in an amount not less than [(A)] (i) the per child cost as described in subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of section 10-16q, as amended by this act, for each child in such program that is three or four years of age and each child that is five years of age who is not eligible to enroll in school, pursuant to section 10-15c, while maintaining services to children under three years of age under this section, and [(B)] (ii) thirteen thousand five hundred dollars for each child three years of age or under who is in infant or toddler care and not in a preschool program, and (B) for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, in accordance with the provisions of section 35 of

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this act. Any such contract entered into on or after July 1, 2022, shall include a provision that at least sixty per cent of the children enrolled in such child care center, group child care home or family child care home are members of families who are at or below seventy-five per cent of the state median income. The Commissioner of Early Childhood may authorize child care centers, group child care homes and family child care homes receiving financial assistance under this subsection to apply a program surplus to the next program year. The Commissioner of Early Childhood shall consult with directors of child care centers in establishing fees for the operation of such centers. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023, the Commissioner of Early Childhood shall, within available appropriations, enter into contracts under this section for the purpose of expanding the number of spaces available to children three years of age or under who are in infant or toddler care and not in a preschool program.

Sec. 37. Subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of section 10-16q of the 2024 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

(b) (1) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020, the per child cost of the Office of Early Childhood school readiness program offered by a school readiness provider shall not exceed eight thousand nine hundred twenty-seven dollars. For the fiscal years ending June 30, 2021, to June 30, 2024, inclusive, the per child cost of the Office of Early Childhood school readiness program offered by a school readiness provider shall not exceed nine thousand twenty-seven dollars. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, the per child cost of the Office of Early Childhood full-time school readiness program offered by a school readiness provider shall [not exceed ten thousand five hundred dollars] be in accordance with the provisions of section 35 of this act.

Sec. 38. Subsection (b) of section 10-16n of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*

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2024):

(b) The Office of Early Childhood shall annually allocate to each town in which the number of children under the temporary family assistance program, as defined in subdivision (17) of section 10-262f, equals or exceeds nine hundred children, (1) determined for the fiscal [year] years ending June 30, 1996, to June 30, 2024, inclusive, an amount equal to one hundred fifty thousand dollars plus eight and one-half dollars for each child under the temporary family assistance program, provided such amount may be reduced proportionately so that the total amount awarded pursuant to this subsection does not exceed two million seven hundred thousand dollars, and (2) for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, an amount determined in accordance with the provisions of section 35 of this act. The office shall award grants to the local and regional boards of education for such towns and nonprofit agencies located in such towns which meet the criteria established pursuant to subsection (a) of this section to maintain the programs established or expanded with funds provided pursuant to this subsection in the fiscal years ending June 30, 1996, and June 30, 1997. Any funds remaining in the allocation to such a town after grants are so awarded shall be used to increase allocations to other such towns. Any funds remaining after grants are so awarded to boards of education and nonprofit agencies in all such towns shall be available to local and regional boards of education and nonprofit agencies in other towns in the state for grants for such purposes.

Sec. 39. Subsection (l) of section 19a-87b of the 2024 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

(l) For the fiscal [years] year ending June 30, 2022, [to June 30, 2026, inclusive] and each fiscal year thereafter, the Commissioner of Early Childhood may issue a license to maintain a family child care home [in New Britain, New Haven, Bridgeport, Stamford, Hartford, Danbury or

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Waterbury] anywhere in the state in accordance with the provisions of this chapter to a person or group of persons who have partnered with an association, organization, corporation, institution or agency, public or private, to provide child care services in a space provided by such association, organization, corporation, institution or agency, provided such space has been approved by the commissioner and is not in a private family home. The commissioner shall not approve more than twenty facilities throughout the state to be used for licenses issued under this subsection. The commissioner may approve more than one facility in each [such] city or town to be used for licenses issued under this subsection. An application for a license under this subsection shall include a copy of the current fire marshal certificate of compliance with the Fire Safety Code, and written verification of compliance with the State Building Code, local zoning and building requirements and local health ordinances. The commissioner may require an applicant for a license under this subsection to comply with additional conditions relating to the health and safety of the children who will be served in such facility. The commissioner may waive any requirement that does not apply to such facility. Any license issued under this subsection shall [expire on June 30, 2026] be for a term of four years, except that the commissioner may suspend or revoke any such license at any time in accordance with the provisions of section 19a-87e.

Sec. 40. Subsection (a) of section 10-506 of the 2024 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

(a) For the fiscal year ending June 30, [2015] 2025, and each fiscal year thereafter, the Office of Early Childhood, in consultation with the Department of Education, shall design and administer the Connecticut Smart Start competitive grant program to provide grants to local and regional boards of education for capital and operating expenses related to establishing or expanding a preschool program under the jurisdiction

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of the board of education for the town. A local or regional board of education may submit an application to the office, in accordance with the provisions of subsection (b) of this section, and may receive (1) a grant for capital expenses in an amount not to exceed seventy-five thousand dollars per classroom for costs related to the renovation of an existing public school to accommodate the establishment or expansion of a preschool program, and (2) an annual grant for operating expenses (A) in an amount not to exceed five thousand dollars per child served by such grant, or (B) in an amount not to exceed seventy-five thousand dollars for each preschool classroom. [, provided no town shall receive a total annual grant for operating expenses greater than three hundred thousand dollars.] Each local or regional board of education that establishes or expands a preschool program under this section shall be eligible to receive an annual grant for operating expenses for a period of five years, provided such preschool program meets standards established by the Commissioner of Early Childhood. Such local or regional board of education may submit an application for renewal of such grant to the office.

Sec. 41. Sections 8-210, 10-16n to 10-16r, inclusive, 10-16t, 10-16u, 10-16aa, 10-520b, 17b-749a and 17b-749d of the general statutes are repealed. (*Effective July 1, 2025*)

Approved May 30, 2024