

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH  
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



**PA 24-74—sSB 5**  
*Education Committee*

**AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL RESOURCES**

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**SUMMARY:** This act makes various unrelated changes to education law. A section-by-section analysis follows.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** July 1, 2024, except the indoor air quality working group provision is effective upon passage.

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### § 1 — CARE 4 KIDS ELIGIBILITY FOR CHILDREN ENROLLED IN MEDICAID

*Expands eligibility for the Care 4 Kids program to include parents or guardians of children who are enrolled in Medicaid and adds them to the priority intake and eligibility list*

The act expands Care 4 Kids program eligibility to parents or guardians of children who are enrolled in Medicaid and adds them to the existing priority intake and eligibility list. To be eligible under prior law, a family had to be income-eligible and have a parent or caretaker who is working, attending high school, receiving temporary family cash assistance and participating in an approved education or training program, or enrolled or participating in one of several education or career pathways. Under related federal regulations, these parents or guardians must still be working or attending a job training or educational program to qualify (see *Background — Federal Funding for Care 4 Kids*).

As under existing law, these parents or guardians must meet the Care 4 Kids program's income guidelines to qualify. (The income limit for new Care 4 Kids program applications is 60% of the state median income (e.g., \$79,910 for a family of four), while the income limit for Medicaid for children under age 19 is 196% of the federal poverty limit (e.g., \$61,152 for a family of four).

#### *Background – Federal Funding for Care 4 Kids*

Federal regulation establishes eligibility for child care services funded through the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF). The regulation requires an eligible child to “reside with a parent or parents who are working or attending a job training or educational program” (45 C.F.R. § 98.20(a)(3)(i)).

The CCDF is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is a state-federal program primarily used to provide financial assistance to low-income families for child care. The state Office of Early Childhood (OEC) uses the federal funds to support the Care 4 Kids program.

### §§ 2 & 3 — OPEN CHOICE PROGRAM FOR NORWALK AND DANBURY

*Expands the Open Choice pilot program for Norwalk by making it ongoing and allowing students who reside in Darien, New Canaan, Wilton, Weston, and Westport to attend public school in Norwalk; makes the Open Choice pilot program for Danbury ongoing*

The act expands the Open Choice pilot program for Norwalk by making it ongoing every year and allowing students who reside in Darien, New Canaan, Wilton, Weston, and Westport to attend public school in Norwalk. Under prior law, for the school year beginning July 1, 2022, up to 50 students living in Norwalk could attend public school in Darien, New Canaan, Wilton, Weston, and Westport. Under the act, beginning with the July 1, 2024, school year, up to 50 students from Norwalk can go to school in those five districts and vice versa.

The act also makes the program ongoing, rather than for just the school year beginning July 1, 2022, for 50 students from Danbury who can attend public

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schools in New Fairfield, Brookfield, Bethel, Ridgefield, and Redding.

Under the act, any school district receiving students under this program must allow them to attend school in the district until they graduate from high school. Prior law already required this of districts receiving students from Danbury and Norwalk.

Open Choice is a voluntary interdistrict attendance program that allows students primarily from the Hartford, New Haven, and Bridgeport districts to attend suburban school districts, and vice versa, on a space-available basis. By law, Open Choice state grants range from \$3,000 to \$8,000 minimum per student, with larger grants for districts that enroll a higher percentage of Open Choice students.

The act also makes conforming changes and removes obsolete language.

### § 4 — MEDICAID ENROLLMENT DATA SHARE

*Requires the social services and early childhood commissioners to enter into an MOU to share Medicaid enrollment data for people applying to Care 4 Kids*

The act requires the social services and early childhood commissioners to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to share, to the extent federal law permits, Medicaid enrollment data between the Department of Social Services and OEC for Medicaid enrollees seeking to enroll in Care 4 Kids. The commissioners must do this by January 1, 2026.

The act specifies that OEC can only use the Medicaid enrollment data to help minimize the information that people applying for Care 4 Kids must submit during the application process.

Care 4 Kids is a child care subsidy program for low-income families (see § 1).

### § 5 — WHOLESOME SCHOOL MEALS PILOT PROGRAM

*Pushes out the wholesome school meals pilot program's start date to FY 25 and makes conforming changes*

The act pushes out the start date for the State Department of Education's (SDE) wholesome school meals pilot program, which awards grants to place a professional chef in alliance school districts. Under prior law, the pilot was administered for FYs 24 to 26 and the act changes this to FYs 25 to 27. It correspondingly removes the October 1, 2023, deadline to apply for the grant.

By law, the chefs must help school meal programs build food service staff capacity, improve meal quality, increase diner satisfaction, streamline operations, and establish a financially viable school meal program. The act eliminates the requirement that SDE partner with an organization that specializes in placing chefs for these purposes.

The act also specifies that SDE may award up to five of these grants, rather than requiring it to award five grants. By law, unchanged by the act, each grant recipient must receive an annual \$150,000 grant in each year of the pilot.

The act also extends the deadline for SDE to report on the pilot to the Appropriations and Education committees from January 1, 2027, to January 1,

2028.

§ 6 — SCHOOL INDOOR AIR QUALITY WORKING GROUP

*Extends the deadline for the indoor air quality working group; adds members to the group; and expands the group's charge*

The act extends the deadline, from July 1, 2024, to January 1, 2031, for the school indoor air quality working group to submit its final report to the governor and the Education, Labor and Public Employees, and Public Health committees. It also requires annual progress reports from the working group, with the first due by January 1, 2025, until January 1, 2030. The final report is due January 1, 2031, and the group terminates on July 1, 2030, or when it submits its final report, whichever is later.

*Additional Members and Additional Qualifiers*

The act adds two members to the group, increasing its total membership from 23 to 25. Specifically, it requires the Senate and House majority leaders to each appoint a third member. The Senate majority leader must appoint a school building official with experience in operations and finance, infrastructure renewal, and project management, and the House majority leader must appoint a Capitol Region Council of Governments representative.

The act corrects the name of the sheet metal organization that has a representative on the board. It requires one of the three Senate president pro tempore appointments to be from the Connecticut Chapter of the Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors' National Association (rather than from the Associated Sheet Metal and Roofing Contractors of Connecticut). It also specifies that the House minority leader's industrial hygienist appointment must be from the UConn Health Center.

*Group Charge*

By law, the group must make recommendations to the legislature on a range of issues related to school indoor air quality, including (1) criteria for rating the priority of heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) repair and remediation needs, (2) optimal HVAC performance benchmarks to minimize the spread of infectious disease, and (3) best practices for the proper maintenance of HVAC systems. The act additionally requires the group to recommend best practices and guidance for:

1. conducting HVAC system uniform inspections and evaluations, including (a) the addition of appropriate professionals to do this work, (b) which professionals may perform certain portions of the inspection and evaluation, and (c) the timing and manner of the inspections, and
2. procuring these services.

The act also requires the group to make recommendations on a model request for proposals that school boards can use when procuring inspection and evaluation

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services.

### § 7 — HVAC INSPECTION AND EVALUATION

*Extends the deadline for school boards to complete an inspection and evaluation of their HVAC systems from January 1, 2025, to June 30, 2031*

The act extends, from January 1, 2025, to June 30, 2031, the deadline for school boards to complete a uniform inspection and evaluation of their school buildings' HVAC systems required by law. Beginning July 1, 2026, school boards must conduct the inspection and evaluation in at least 20% of their schools each year until all schools in the district are inspected. It also requires that each school building be inspected again every five years.

Prior law required school boards to complete the uniform HVAC system inspection and evaluation in each school before January 1, 2025, and then every five years.

Similar to prior law, the act allows the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) to grant a waiver from the inspection requirement, upon a school board's request, if the department finds (1) there is an insufficient number of certified testing, adjusting, and balancing technicians; industrial hygienists certified by the American Board of Industrial Hygiene or the Board for Global EHS Credentialing; or mechanical engineers to perform the inspections and evaluations or (2) the board has scheduled the inspection for a date in the following year. Specifically, the act allows DAS to grant a waiver of up to one year from the five-year deadline and the requirement to inspect at least 20% of a district's schools each year. Prior law allowed a one-year waiver of the January 1, 2025, deadline.

By law the inspection and evaluation must identify the extent to which each school's ventilation system is operating to provide appropriate ventilation to the school building according to the most recent indoor ventilation standards. The inspection and evaluation must result in a written report that includes any corrective actions needed for the ventilation system or the HVAC infrastructure.

### § 8 — STATE GRANTS FOR HVAC INSPECTIONS

*Delays, from July 1, 2024, to July 1, 2026, the prohibition on DAS awarding HVAC grants to applicants that have not certified their compliance with HVAC inspection and evaluation requirements*

Prior law prohibited the DAS commissioner from awarding grants for HVAC or indoor air quality improvements to school districts that had not, as of July 1, 2024, certified compliance with the law's inspection and evaluation requirements. The act delays the start of this prohibition to July 1, 2026, to correspond to the delayed HVAC inspection and evaluation deadlines described above (see § 7). Presumably, if a district applies during the 2026 to 2031 time period, it will have to certify that it met the threshold percentage of inspecting at least 20% of its schools each year established under this act.

The law allows school boards and regional educational service centers (RESCs)

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to apply for the grants to reimburse costs for installing, replacing, or upgrading HVAC systems or related improvements. The school board may receive a reimbursement grant for 20% to 80% of its eligible expenses, based on its town ranking among all Connecticut towns using property wealth as a measure. As with the school construction grant program, less wealthy towns receive a higher reimbursement rate. RESCs are reimbursed under a similar method that reflects the wealth of the towns they serve.