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Testimony of
Kate Dias & Joslyn DeLancey
Connecticut Education Association
Before the
Government Oversight Committee

Re:

SB 424 AAC Oversight of Plans Pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Special Education Needs in the State

March 10, 2026

Senator Gadkar-Wilcox, Representative Dathan, Sen. Sampson, Rep. Carney and honorable members of the Government Oversight Committee. We are Kate Dias and Joslyn DeLancey, president and vice president of Connecticut Education Association (CEA) which represents educators in over 150 school districts across the state.

CEA supports SB 424 AAC Oversight of Plans Pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Special Education Needs in the State. We support oversight by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) as it concerns 504 plans, and as to how their requirements compare to individualized education programs (IEPs). We also support efforts to quantify the school counselor and social worker shortage in Connecticut. We believe such data collection as required in SB 424 will serve as a launchpad for better supporting special education in our local and regional school districts. It is also important to properly delineate the roles of guidance counselors and the supports that they need to fully serve their students.

Given that the most recently reported Connecticut student-to-school counselor ratio is 349-to-1¹ and that the American School Counselor Association recommends a ratio of 250-to-1², clearly a shortage in Connecticut exists. We support the conducting of a social worker needs assessment in section 9 and the development of a workforce development plan in section 11 to meet the determined need. We further recommend that the needs assessment be required to indicate actual and ideal ratios of social workers by district and by school. The Department of Education should be required to make this data publicly available on its EdSight platform and consistent with the Educator Vacancy Dashboard.³

Researchers found that in Connecticut public schools, student outcomes improved when students received counseling services in schools with a ratio under 250-to-1.⁴ This included “significantly fewer suspensions and disciplinary incidents.” Further research found that improved ratios were associated with student academic performance and graduation rates.⁵ An improved overall school climate is associated with an improved learning environment.

In addition to addressing high ratios, the state should also account for administrative-creep and out-of-scope duties that reduce the amount of time school counselors have to engage with students. Connecticut school counselors have been required to perform tasks outside the scope of their roles⁶ at a time when student-to-counselor ratios have increased.⁷ Under such scenarios, school counselors and social workers are unable to meet the complex needs of students and students fall through the cracks.

CEA also supports protection against the discrimination of students with disabilities. We believe that codifying protections will ensure more adequate and equitable access to educational services for students with an IEP or a 504 plan.

We would like to express concern for section 3, which expands the powers of the Office of the Educational Ombudsperson in a way that shifts it to an investigatory body. We

¹ [See How Many School Counselors Are In Connecticut | CT News Junkie:](https://ctnewsjunkie.com/2022/12/15/see-how-many-school-counselors-are-in-connecticut/)

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² [School Counselor Roles & Ratios - American School Counselor Association \(ASCA\):](https://www.schoolcounselor.org/About-School-Counseling/School-Counselor-Roles-Ratios)

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/About-School-Counseling/School-Counselor-Roles-Ratios>

³ [Educator Vacancy Dashboard:](https://public-edsight.ct.gov/educators/fte-staffing/educator-vacancy-dashboard?language=en_US) https://public-edsight.ct.gov/educators/fte-staffing/educator-vacancy-dashboard?language=en_US

⁴ Lapan, R. T., Whitcomb, S. A., & Aleman, N. M. (2012). Connecticut Professional School Counselors: College and Career Counseling Services and Smaller Ratios Benefit Students. *Professional School Counseling*, 16(2).

⁵ Goodman-Scott, E., Sink, C.A., Cholewa, B.E. and Burgess, M. (2018), An Ecological View of School Counselor Ratios and Student Academic Outcomes: A National Investigation. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 96: 388-398. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12221>

⁶ Lapan, R. T., Whitcomb, S. A., & Aleman, N. M. (2012). Connecticut Professional School Counselors: College and Career Counseling Services and Smaller Ratios Benefit Students. *Professional School Counseling*, 16(2).

⁷ Carleton H. Brown & David Knight (2025) Student-to-school counselor ratios: understanding the history and ethics behind professional staffing recommendations and realities in the United States, *Ethics & Behavior*, 35:3, 221-239, DOI: 10.1080/10508422.2024.2342520

support the initial role of the ombudsman position to help parents and others navigate resources and resolve roadblocks. We believe that any investigatory role should be placed in an office solely designated to perform such role, which would be more akin to that of an inspector general.