

Housing Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: HB-5259 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT CONCERNING THE EDUCATION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND
Title: YOUTH.

Vote Date: 3/5/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/24/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Housing Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would codify the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act into state law. The legislature hopes that codifying McKinney-Vento would protect unhoused children by ensuring they retain access to educational services and transportation thereto, regardless of their housing status.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None Expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Connecticut Voices for Children, Carmen Clarkin, Strategic Initiatives Assistant submitted testimony voicing the opinion that this legislation ensures that housing instability does not lead to educational or social displacement. She adds that this is similarly the case for students in the foster care system. She believes that when a student is homeless or in the foster care system, a barrier is created for them to have school success. She states that the federal budget for FY2026 would have a 70% cut and eliminate the federal mandate that schools prioritize the needs of unhoused students.

Not Just Us, Brian Donahue, Founder submitted testimony emphasizing that investing in the education of unhoused youth ensures that all students have access to the same resources regardless of the housing status. Brian notes that towns and the state should do

everything to ensure a child is able to get to school and have a place to complete their work. Brian believes that often the only stability in the lives of unhoused children is that of their teachers, friends, and family.

CT Coalition to End Homelessness, Sarah Fox, CEO submitted testimony noting that 5,000 students in Connecticut are experiencing homelessness. She is of the opinion that HB 5259 ensures Connecticut students are not left vulnerable by federal volatility. She stated that homeless students experience higher rates of chronic absenteeism and lower graduation rates compared to their peers. Sarah believes that educational disruption compounds instability and stability is protective. She thinks that HB 5259, while not solving the housing crisis, ensures the mission of prevention, response, and housing expansion is continued.

Jasmine Franco submitted testimony stating that educational stability is a key protective factor for children facing housing insecurity. She believes that schools serve as the most stable environment in a child's life. As a social worker, she notes that HB 5259 reflects the core values of social justice, equity, and the dignity and worth of every child.

Tim Gabriele submitted testimony believing that this legislation gives children experiencing homelessness a fighting chance. He adds that he hopes the need for this legislation dissipates when all Connecticut children are guaranteed a right to stable housing.

Susan B. Anthony Project, Isabella Gilmour submitted testimony noting that it is important to codify so that the protections of the McKinney-Vento Act are supported regardless of what happens at the federal level. She provided a story of when a family relocated to Connecticut, and under McKinney-Vento, the child of that family was able to enroll in school. Giving her mother more time to gain employment, attend appointments, complete court filings, attend hearings, and plan for their future. Isabella believes that the rights and protections of the McKinney-Vento Act are at risk, which threatens one of the consistencies in families' lives, providing opportunities, basic needs, and healthy emotional development.

New Haven Legal Assistance Association, Sara Parker McKernan, Policy Advocate submitted testimony noting that 5,137 Connecticut students experienced homelessness during the 2024-25 school year and there are 1.3 million homeless students nationwide. She believes that Connecticut's rising numbers, as it relates to homelessness reflects the broader housing instability crisis affecting families across the United States. She continues stating that housing instability is strongly correlated with chronic absenteeism, academic underperformance, increased mobility and school transfers, and disrupted access to special education services. She believes that families without stable housing often lack proof of residency documentation, access to consistent internet or phone service, reliable transportation, and the ability to promptly retrieve academic or medical records. She is of the opinion that codifying protections strengthens clarity, accountability, and consistency.

Center for Children's Advocacy, Stacey Violante Cote, Deputy Director submitted testimony in support of this legislation noting that students who are "Doubled Up" comprise the largest group of students experiencing homelessness. She defined doubled up as an individual who stays with others due to their loss of housing, she states that these individuals tend to be invisible. Stacey is of the opinion that codifying all federal provisions of McKinney-Vento into state statutes is the only way to ensure students experiencing homelessness do not have any lapse in legal protections in the events federal protections are eliminated. She

continued by pointing out that many other states have either codified, or are currently working to codify, McKinney-Vento into state law.

The following submitted general support to the bill:

City of New London, Michael Passero, Mayor
Connecticut Legal Services Inc., Raphael Podolsky, Attorney and Housing Advocate
Connecticut Tenants Union, Jared Cavaquolo
Anonymous Educator
Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen, Claudette Kidd, Client Engagement Specialist
The Partnership, Amy Peletier, Coalition and Advocacy Director
Friendship Service Center, Caitlin Rose, Chief Executive Officer
Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Mario Volpe, Advocacy Manager
Anonymous, Anonymous

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

The following submitted general opposition to the bill:

Anonymous, Anonymous
Anonymous, Anonymous
Chip Banker
Brian Fitzpatrick
Freedom Party, LLC Luke Florian, Member,
Daniel S

Reported by: Tyler Fisher

Date: 3/13/2026