

Committee on Children JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: SB-6 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING SUPPORTS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.

Vote Date: 3/5/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/3/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Committee on Children

CO-SPONSORS OF BILL:

Sen. Looney, 11th Dist.
Sen. Duff, 25th Dist.
Sen. Anwar, 3rd Dist.
Sen. Cabrera, 17th Dist.
Sen. Cohen, 12th Dist.
Sen. Flexer, 29th Dist.
Sen. Gadkar-Wilcox, 22nd Dist.
Sen. Gaston, 23rd Dist.
Sen. Hartley, 15th Dist.
Sen. Hochadel, 13th Dist.
Sen. Honig, 8th Dist.
Sen. Kushner, 24th Dist.
Sen. Lesser, 9th Dist.
Sen. Lopes, 6th Dist.
Sen. Maher, 26th Dist.
Sen. Maroney, 14th Dist.
Sen. Marx, 20th Dist.
Sen. McCrory, 2nd Dist.
Sen. Miller, 27th Dist.
Sen. Needleman, 33rd Dist.
Sen. Osten, 19th Dist.
Sen. Rahman, 4th Dist.
Sen. Slap, 5th Dist.
Rep. Martinez, 22nd Dist.
Rep. Gauthier, 38th Dist.

Rep. Elliott, 88th Dist.
Rep. Reyes, 75th Dist.
Rep. Simms, 140th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill establishes provisions for school breakfasts and school lunches for all students of eligible districts. It seeks to ensure that these students are adequately fed and thus able to perform better in class, attend school more frequently, and experience improved health outcomes. In addition, the bill would prohibit any person convicted of certain crimes from sharing a primary residence with a child unless they are a biological or adoptive parent. It would notify the Commissioner of the Department of Children & Families of the release of a convicted person, define their residential address, and work in conjunction with the respective social worker on that front. This provision seeks to ensure the safety of children in their homes and prevent people convicted of crimes against children from living with them. An additional component of the bill requires the Department of Education to notify the Department of Children and Families when a parent or guardian withdraws their child from public school. This would signal to the Commissioner to determine if the child is involved in the protective services of DCF. If the child is the subject of such protection, the notation of the public-school withdrawal will be included in the child's case file. This serves the purpose of better informing the DCF workers involved in the case and overseeing the safety of children who are removed from the public school system. The final section of the bill accounts for a change in the naming of a state-integrated data system. This facilitates the sharing of data between agencies and aids in the reporting process to accurately inform public policy.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

LCO 2815: In Sec. 4, a reference to a specific statute was removed so that the provisions of the section do not apply to convictions under that statute. In Sec. 5(c), language was added to require the Commissioner of Children and Families to destroy information received by the Commissioner of Education pertaining to any child that is not DCF-involved. This is to ensure privacy for families that are not under investigation by the Department.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Office of Chief Public Defender, Director of Delinquency and Child Protection, Renee Cimino: The Office of Chief Public Defender opposes Section 3 of the bill because it contains procedural and substantive due process violations, comprising none of the following: an opportunity for the convicted person to be heard, an individual assessment, a date of conviction, offender rehabilitation, and an appeal process.

Office of the Child Advocate, Acting Child Advocate, Christina Ghio: The Office of the Child Advocate voices their support for free school breakfasts and lunches for eligible school districts, adding that 1 in 6 Connecticut children are food insecure. In Section 4, the Office suggests that the reporting expectations set by DCF should include assessments by the case workers involved. Attorney Ghio would also ask that DCF assessors work in conjunction with the assigned probation or parole officer, should that apply to the individual. The Office supports Section 5, which would identify possibly at-risk children. A suggested language

change would forward such information to a case worker for purposes of conducting a safety assessment.

Connecticut Department of Children & Families, Interim Commissioner, Susan

Hamilton: The Commissioner requests that the language in Sections 3 and 4 as currently drafted reflect existing, up-to-date policy and state law. As written, the Department feels the bill's language makes unclear what DCF's response would be to a resulting action following a notification. DCF also requests similar language as mentioned in Sections 3-4 for Section 5, specifying that the Department would not take action if a child protection case was not active.

Office of Policy and Management, Chief Data Officer, Scott Gaul: Mr. Gaul testifies in support of Sections 6-11, which adopts DataLinkCT as an updated state integration data system and makes reporting requirements for disconnected youth more manageable.

Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity, Children's Policy Analysts, Christian Duborg, Melvette Hill, Yukiyo Iida, and Thomas Nuccio:

The Commission supports SB 6 with minor recommendations. They consider Sections 1-2 as supportive steps that help strengthen support for children and families. They agree with implementing a refundable child tax credit that would put money back into families' pockets, which complements Section 2's mission. They suggest a "food and nutrition" fund that would help establish program permanency, and additional measures like 15% local purchasing requirements that benefit quality produce and CT farmers. The Commission names Sections 3-5 as important to the health, safety, and protection of children.

Office of the State Comptroller, State Comptroller, Sean Scanlon: The Comptroller supports SB 6 and the creation of a child tax credit. He understands the complexities surrounding debate on revenue and fiscal matters but offers his support for a new Child Tax Credit or the continuation of the state's Child Tax Rebate.

State Department of Education, Commissioner, Charlene Tucker: The Commissioner supports select components of the bill. Section 2 would require districts to also provide lunch at no cost to all students, not just those eligible, which would cost the Governor's Budget millions more than anticipated. The Department notes that data releases in Section 5 fall under the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act's (FERPA) purview and therefore severely restrict the sharing of confidential student data. SDE also supports rebranding the data system mentioned in Sections 6-11.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Many legislators support Section 1 of SB6. They highlight how many Connecticut families struggle to make ends meet and underscore the importance of tax credits that recognize the high costs of children.

Rep. Hector Arzeno

Rep. Patrick Biggins

Rep. Matt Blumenthal

Rep. Marcus Brown

Rep. Eilish Collins Main

Rep. Kevin Brown

Rep. Brandon Chafee
Rep. Hubert Delany
Rep. Kate Farrar
Rep. Jack Fazzino
Rep. Antonio Felipe
Rep. Dan Gaiewski
Rep. Nick Gauthier
Rep. Jullian Gilchrest
Rep. Bob Godfrey
Rep. Ken Gucker
Rep. Bill Heffernan
Rep. Susan Johnson
Rep. Eleni Kavros DeGraw
Rep. Maryam Khan
Rep. LaMark Muir
Rep. Cristin McCarthy Vahey
Rep. Amy Morrin Bello
Rep. Anthony Nolan
Rep. John Michael Parker
Rep. Michael Quinn
Rep. Geraldo Reyes
Rep. Kara Rochelle
Rep. Farley Santos
Rep. Kaitlyn Shake
Rep. Frank Smith
Rep. Laurie Sweet
Rep. Gary Turco

Senate President Pro Tempore, Sen. Martin Looney: Sen. Looney advocates for the bill's aim to establish a Child Tax Credit and a universal school meals program in-state. He additionally approves of Sections 3 through 5, stating that they are basic child welfare provisions.

Multiple organizations that provide food, education, and healthcare in Connecticut express support for Sections 1-2 of the bill by recognizing the need to address structural conditions that influence child development and make strategic investments in the future. They emphasize that the largest components of family budgets – housing and childcare – are rising faster than the inflation rate. These sections serve the purposes of ensuring that children are fed and saving families money. They highlight the positive impact that this has on children's health and wellbeing.

Connecticut Cradle to Career Coalition, Director of Policy & Civic Engagement, Kathleen Callahan
Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut, President & CEO, Maryam Elahi
CT Early Childhood Alliance, Executive Director, Merrill Gay
The Danbury Collective, Executive Director, Melissa Hannequin
American Academy of Pediatrics, MD, Emily Hogeland
United Way of Greater New Haven, President & CEO, Jennifer Heath
CT Food Sovereignty Collective, Co-Founder, Meg Hourigan

Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut, Community Organizing and Policy Intern, Quinn Meehan
Windham Area Interfaith Ministry, Executive Director, Dwayne Paul
Friendship Service Center, CEO, Caitlin Rose
She Leads Justice, Policy Director, Tonishia Signore
She Leads Justice, Executive Director, Janee Woods Weber
The Connecticut Area Health Education Center Network, Associate Director, Cecil Tengtenga
Building One Community, Board Member, Susan Adamsen

Several members of the public support SB6 and emphasize the importance of these tax credits, citing reasons such as fixed income, parental status, quality of life, and more. Many note witnessing the challenges and economic struggles second-hand, such as students, teachers, community members, and childcare center employees, arguing that any financial relief helps.

Allison Ping Benguiat, New London
Jessica Cohen
Krystal Coleman, Hartford
Mark Debrady
Ashley Gaudiano
Nora Geissert
Kim Hughes, Pawcatuck
Marinda Monfilston, Cromwell
Megan Neely
Cathleen Ostuw, Stamford
Marcia Panciera
Margaret O'Shea, Old Lyme
Valerie Derisme, Norwalk
Carol Williams

Coalition for Responsible Home Education, Executive Director, Tess Ulrey: Ms. Ulrey testifies on behalf of a homeschool organization with 200+ alumni. She states that, "...it is my responsibility to look across a spectrum of homeschool alumni experiences and not just amplify the good outcomes, but support a myriad of policies and methods that help address bad outcomes as well. There can be horrific circumstances when homeschooling is used as a cover for abuse and neglect, and that is why SB No. 6 is so important." She explains that reactive withdrawal from school has been identified as a key flag for potential abuse and neglect; and she maintains that basic child safety guardrails are not personal attacks on homeschooling parents.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Atkinson Law LLC, Attorney, Cameron Atkinson: Attorney Atkinson opposes the bill and notes how homeschooling parents generally distrust DCF. He says Section 5 would make matters worse and exacerbate the department-to-family relationship. The lack of a restriction on DCF's use of this information is a problem for many homeschool families.

Connecticut Republican Assembly, National Director, Anne Manusky: Ms. Manusky states that the bill violates the 14th Amendment's recognition of parental rights regarding education, citing several Supreme Court decisions, and the Connecticut Constitution. She expresses frustration with the Department of Children and Families and legislators for neglecting children. She strongly opposes this bill and testifies that the public would bring lawsuits if it were to pass.

Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, Executive Director, Fran Rabinowitz: Ms. Rabinowitz respects the intent behind requiring the Education Commissioner to notify DCF of withdrawals, but notes that not every instance signals a concern related to child welfare. She states that "...Establishing an expectation that the Commissioner notify DCF of every student withdrawal, regardless of context, may prove to be administratively cumbersome and may dilute attention from students who are truly at risk. CAPSS raises this concern not to resist interagency communication, but to encourage a thoughtful and targeted approach that balances vigilance with practicality."

CT Residents Against Medical Mandates, President, Kat Prokop: Ms. Prokop opposes this legislation because it does not use evidence, proportionality, or constitutionality to protect children. She maintains that lawful parental discretion takes precedence over agency action, arguing that "...If the legislature's true concern is ensuring that children who disappear from school are not falling through the cracks, then craft policy that targets documented truancy abuse patterns or verified neglect scenarios. Require reasonable suspicion. Define risk factors with precision. Incorporate procedural safeguards. But do not cast a net so wide that it ensnares every family that makes a lawful educational decision."

Deborah G. Stevenson Law, Attorney, Deborah Stevenson: Attorney Stevenson testifies against Section 5 of the bill because it removes the presumption of innocence of every parent in the state, stating that is a violation of the Connecticut Constitution. She argues that the fear parents have of being reported to DCF could keep families in a public school not of their choice and thus violates the rights of parents to make decisions about their children's education.

There were 460 anonymous testifiers who submitted written testimony in opposition to this bill.

**Reported by: Mia Giglietti, Zachary Robinson,
Frederica Dampson, and Alexandria Silva**

Date: 3/13/2026