

# Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No:** SB-7 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL EQUITY.

**Vote Date:** 3/16/2026

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/4/2026

**File No.:** 448

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Education Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

This bill exists to expand the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) foundation amount. This is an important adjustment to relieve financial hardships on Connecticut school districts. As of now, this amount has not reflected inflation and growing costs, and schools are suffering. The ECS funding is necessary to support key priorities like early literacy, special education, teacher recruitment, and college and career readiness.

This bill also expands eligibility for regional funding, creates a working group to study the education funding formula, and establishes the STIPEND program for student teachers. These provisions will help districts in need of funding, as well as encourage student teachers to stay in their desired profession.

## **SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):**

The substitute (1) makes the FY 31 and beyond foundation adjustment based on the prior year's foundation amount, rather than \$15,500 and (2) eliminates sections on excused absences for religious holidays and a student teacher stipend program.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

Charlene Tucker, Commissioner, Connecticut State Department of Education

This testimony, from the Commissioner of the Connecticut State Department of Education, provides a detailed analysis of S.B. 7, outlining both its benefits as well as its significant fiscal and implementation considerations.

Section 1 as written, increases the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) foundation amount from \$11,525 to \$15,500 by FY2030 and ties it to inflation thereafter. Tucker states that Section 1 represents a major financial commitment. The estimated cost would be about \$60 million in FY2027, growing to \$559 million by FY2030 for ECS alone. Because the ECS foundation also affects charter, magnet, and agricultural science school funding, total costs rise to over \$82 million in FY2027 and \$690 million by FY2030, with continued increases in future years.

Section 2 expands eligibility for regional funding bonuses to towns that send students to other districts for high school. While costs are still being calculated, the Department anticipates this will add millions more to the overall cost of the bill.

Section 3 creates a working group to study and improve the state's education funding formula, which the Department views as a significant step toward long-term equity and sustainability. As for Sections 4 and 5, which address excused absences for religious observances, the Department recommends broadening the language to include all students (including preschool and special education students up to age 22) and avoiding listing specific holidays to ensure inclusivity. The Department also notes that existing policy already allows religious absences to be excused.

Section 6, establishing the STIPEND program for student teachers, is supported in concept but The Department raises significant concerns. This program would cost approximately \$20.8 million annually and is not currently funded in the Governor's budget. The Department highlights logistical challenges, including tracking around 1,300 student teachers per year and monitoring their employment status for three years afterwards. Another challenge will be collecting repayment from those who do not meet program requirements. The agency currently lacks the infrastructure to manage this system and would need additional resources.

To address these challenges, the Department suggests modifying the program by providing stipend funds directly to school districts rather than individuals. This would allow districts to oversee participation. It also notes a disparity between the proposed \$16,000 student teacher stipend and the much smaller stipend (about \$500) provided to experienced mentor teachers.

Finally, the Commissioner points to an alternative existing initiative, the Teacher Residency Apprenticeship Program (funded at \$2 million), which allows aspiring teachers to earn while they train and may offer a more practical approach to reducing financial barriers and improving teacher recruitment and retention. The Department of Education supports the goals of S.B. 7 but emphasizes the fiscal impact, the need for careful implementation, and the potential adjustments to ensure the proposals are sustainable as well as effective.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

### Leslie Blatteau, President, New Haven Federation of Teachers

This testimony discusses the need to increase the ECS foundation amount and fix a funding formula that has not kept pace with inflation, leaving schools under-resourced. The testimony emphasizes that stronger investment is necessary to support educators, school staff, and facilities. The author also frames the idea of equitable school funding as essential to student success and the broader well-being of communities.

Kathleen Callahan, Director Policy & Civic Engagement, Connecticut Cradle to Career Coalition

This testimony supports SB 7 because it would increase and stabilize ECS funding, helping districts maintain core services without overburdening local taxpayers. The author points out that predictable, inflation-indexed funding prevents erosion of resources and gives the stability schools need. The testimony also supports the complementary bill HB-5329, an education innovation grant program, which would support long-term student success alongside stable funding.

Marissa Cardona, Senior Engagement Specialist, CAS

This testimony from the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS), emphasizes that all students deserve a high-quality education regardless of zip code. These individual stresses that the bill's funding provisions (raising the ECS foundation from \$11,525 to \$13,500 per student and maintaining \$400,000 for leadership support) are essential sustaining critical educational programs. Overall, the author frames SB 7 as a moral and practical step toward equitable education, providing districts with the resources needed to meet modern standards.

Senate Democratic Caucus, Connecticut General Assembly. Hartford CT

The Senate Democratic Caucus supports SB 7, emphasizing its role in improving educational equity across Connecticut. The authors highlight that the ECS foundation amount, currently \$11,525, has not been increased since 2014 despite rising costs. SB 7 would raise the foundation gradually—\$12,500 in FY27, \$13,500 in FY28, \$14,500 in FY29, and \$15,500 in FY30—and then index it to inflation, ensuring districts, especially those with limited local resources, can adequately fund education. The bill also establishes a working group to review and improve the ECS formula. The Senate Democrats urge committee support for SB 7 as a critical investment in Connecticut's students.

Kate Dias, President, CEA

This testimony states that SB 7 would increase the ECS foundation amount and adjust it for inflation, helping address long-standing underfunding in Connecticut schools. While supportive, the testimony urges more increases to better meet student needs. It also highlights support the student teacher stipends and expanded religious observance absences.

Ryan Donlon, Associate Executive Director, LEARN

This testimony strongly supports H.B. 5002 and SB 7 because they both would modernize and increase ECS funding. The author emphasizes that rising expenses and growing student needs have been straining districts. This impacts staffing, programs, and student services. The testimony highlights that predictable, inflation-adjusted funding would provide stability for districts, support educators, sustain programming, and reduce reliance on local property taxes. Changes like this are especially important for magnet schools and districts of choice.

John Flanders, President, SEEK

This testimony supports SB 7 because it increases the ECS foundation amount, which the speaker argues is essential, especially in special education. The testimony emphasizes that higher ECS funding would help reduce inequities between property-rich and property-poor districts and provide more support for students with special needs. The testimony also recommends including stronger special education representation on the ECS task force. It also

recommends targeting the student teacher stipend program toward shortage areas (i.e. special education), where staffing needs are most critical.

Laura Francis, Executive Director, SCRCOG

This testimony from the South-Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG) expresses strong support for SB 7, emphasizing on the bill's role in advancing educational equity. The testimony, featuring multiple authors, focuses on the importance of updated increases to the ECS foundation amount. Additionally, the testimony endorses the bill's educator pipeline initiatives, particularly the stipend program, which provides paid student teaching opportunities in high-need districts. It also praises updates to attendance and truancy policies, including expanded excused absences for religious observances, as more reflective of students' real-life challenges. Finally, SCRCOG supports the creation of a working group to study education funding, stressing the need for geographically diverse representation.

Seth Freeman, President, 4C's SEIU 1973

This testimony from a professor and union leader, supports SB 7 and HB 5328 while urging amendments. The author states that Connecticut's education funding system is inequitable and states that the ECS foundation amount being frozen since 2013 (despite rising costs) is to blame. They emphasize that underfunding disproportionately affects low-income students, multilingual learners, and students with disabilities. This leads to unequal preparation by the time students reach college. Taking from their experience teaching in Hartford, the author explains that gaps in K–12 funding translate into disparities in college readiness due to systemic inequities. The testimony also backs HB 5328 and calls for strengthening the bill by ensuring representation from affected communities, expanding curriculum guidance, and reliable long-term accountability.

Carol Gale, President, Hartford Federation of Teachers

This testimony supports SB 7 but argues that stronger action is needed to address education funding inequities. The author calls for increasing the ECS foundation amount to approximately \$16,525 immediately (rather than gradual phase-ins) and indexing it to inflation. The author states that fully funding education is essential to breaking this cycle and ensuring all students receive adequate support.

Betsy Gara, Executive Director, COST

This testimony from the Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) discusses the growing financial strain on municipalities due to rising education and special education costs. It argues that ECS funding (unchanged since 2013) has forced towns to rely heavily on property taxes and calls for increasing the ECS foundation amount to around \$16,000 to reflect inflation and current costs. The testimony also raises concerns about additional financial pressures. This includes the proposed elimination of \$12 million in funding for magnet schools, which would shift costs to local districts, and insufficient reimbursement for special education through the Excess Cost Grant. Its further advocates for increased support for Agriscience programs.

Emma Gianoplus, Director of External Affairs, Libertas Academy Charter School

This testimony supports H.B. 5002 and S.B. 7, arguing that equitable education funding benefits all public-school students, including those in charter schools. Drawing on their experience with a charter school serving high-need students, they emphasize that adequate funding leads to strong academic outcomes. This funding should be based on student need rather than geography or school type.

Patrick Gibson, Deputy Executive Director, School & State Finance Project

This testimony supports both H.B. 5002 and S.B. 7 as important steps toward addressing long-standing inequities in Connecticut's education funding system. It argues that the current foundation no longer reflects rising costs or growing student needs, forcing districts to either cut services or rely more heavily on local property taxes. The testimony also backs provisions like the ECS working group, student teacher stipends, and expanded regional funding incentives, while recommending technical improvements to increase transparency and ensure fair funding across all programs.

Yvette Gorevitch, Executive Director, ConnCASE

This testimony from ConnCASE supports several bills aimed at improving special education funding, transparency, and services in Connecticut. It reinforces the need for fully funding a contingency grant for unexpected special education costs and strengthening the Excess Cost Grant to better reimburse districts. ConnCASE endorses initiatives to improve planning by requiring earlier cost reporting from private providers and installing cameras in seclusion rooms. ConnCASE also supports leadership development through a school administrator mentorship program.

Jeff Gordon, State Senator

This testimony supports SB 7's efforts to increase K-12 education funding by raising the ECS foundation amount. The senator argues the foundation should be increased to reflect inflation (around \$16,650) and then tied the Consumer Price Index to ensure it stays current. They emphasize that higher state funding would help schools manage rising costs, improve budget stability, and reduce reliance on local property taxes. The testimony frames education funding as essential to affordability and community well-being.

Steven Hernandez, Executive Director, ConnCAN

This testimony supports SB 7, HB 5002, and HB 5329, emphasizing the need to increase and index the ECS foundation amount to inflation, while also mentioning that the state now has the financial capacity to do so and should reduce reliance on local property taxes. The testimony also supports ending tuition billing between districts and fully funding public school choice programs to ensure fairness and stability. Additionally, the author backs the creation of an Education Innovation Fund.

J. McBride & C. Senecal, Public Policy Team, Greater Hartford Gives Foundation

This testimony supports SB 7, emphasizing its role in addressing longstanding inequities in education funding and improving student outcomes. This testimony speaks on the need to increase and index the ECS foundation amount. The testimony also shows supports for the provisions addressing chronic absenteeism and creating stipends for student teachers. The Greater Hartford Gives Foundation views the bill as a critical step toward more equitable, stable, and effective education funding statewide.

Martin Looney, Senate President Pro Tempore

This testimony supports SB 7 and focuses on improving educational equity through updates to Connecticut's Education Cost Sharing formula. It emphasizes that the ECS foundation amount has been frozen at \$11,525 since 2013 and has not kept pace with rising education costs. The proposed phased increases to the foundation and eventual indexing to inflation are described as necessary to ensure adequate and fair funding for all districts. The testimony also supports

creating a working group to review the ECS formula and a student teacher stipend program to strengthen and retain educators in high-need districts.

Glenn Lungarini, Executive Director, CAS-CIAC

This testimony supports SB 7 and emphasizes statewide educational equity through both funding reforms and student opportunity programs. The Connecticut Association of Schools and CIAC argue that their own programs already advance “experiential equity” by supporting student leadership, culturally responsive education, and multilingual family engagement across districts. They stress that their \$400,000 state appropriation sustains these initiatives, which serve over 170,000 students statewide.

Katie Maron, Chief of School Support, CT Charter Schools Association

This testimony from the Connecticut Charter Schools Association supports S.B. 7 and H.B. 5002 for increasing education funding but, they also argue the proposed ECS foundation increases need to be higher to reflect current costs. It highlights that H.B. 5002 takes an important additional step by increasing weighted funding for charter schools, though full funding remains unimplemented and overdue. The testimony emphasizes that charter schools serve high-need students and often outperform comparable district schools despite being the lowest-funded public schools in the state.

Kathryn Meyer, Atty Director of MLP, Center for Children’s Advocacy

This testimony from the Center for Children’s Advocacy strongly supports S.B. 7’s proposal to increase and index the ECS foundation amount, arguing that adequate funding is essential to ensure safety and equitable education for high-need students with disabilities. Drawing on their own legal advocacy experience, the author describes severe consequences of underfunding, including unsafe classroom conditions, inadequate staffing, and violations of students’ civil rights. Overall, the testimony emphasizes that increased funding and monitoring are critical to protecting vulnerable students and ensuring appropriate educational services.

Kendrick Moore, Ast Director of Equity & Leadership, CASCIAC

This testimony from Kendrick Moore of CASCIAC urges the state to maintain \$400,000 in funding for the organization’s student leadership and equity programs. It highlights CASCIAC’s role in serving over 170,000 students through leadership boards, school visits, workshops, and statewide initiatives. The testimony states that these programs help students develop critical skills like leadership, teamwork, and accountability, preparing them for college and careers. It argues that continued state funding is essential to sustain and expand this impactful work across Connecticut schools.

Desi Nesmith, Executive Director, CREC

This testimony from the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) supports both H.B. 5002 and S.B. 7, describing them as a critical “lifeline” for underfunded RESC magnet schools. CREC urges maintaining existing funding (including \$12 million for magnet schools) and adopting a stronger, more predictable funding model by increasing and indexing the ECS foundation to keep pace with rising costs. The testimony also supports more flexibility in using SEED funds and calls for including RESC representation in special education rate-setting decisions. CREC emphasizes the importance of sustainable, equitable funding to ensure the viability of regional educational programs and services.

TJ Nuccio, Children’s Policy Analyst, CWCSEO

This testimony from the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity supports S.B. 7, S.B. 311, and H.B. 5323, emphasizing that these are policies that will advance educational equity and student well-being. This testimony supports increasing and indexing the ECS foundation, expanding excused absences for religious observances, and creating a paid student teacher stipend program to address educator shortages.

Eric Protulis, Executive Director, EASTCONN

This testimony from the Executive Director of EASTCONN, supports both SB 7 and HB 5002 and urges lawmakers to combine the strongest elements of each bill to create a fair and sustainable education funding system. They support raising the ECS foundation amount (SB 7) and indexing funding to inflation (HB 5002) to create a more modern, predictable system. This author also brings up the financial struggles for RESC-operated magnet schools and recommends additional funding support. Additionally, they call for RESC representation in state special education rate-setting decisions, stating that the organizations have critical expertise and serve many high-need students.

Fran Rabinowitz, Executive Director, CAPSS

The Connecticut Association of Public-School Superintendents (CAPSS) submitted testimony strongly supporting SB 7. CAPSS argues that the ECS foundation has remained stagnant for over a decade despite rising costs for staffing, special education, transportation, and student supports, placing significant strain on districts. The organization supports SB 7's proposal to raise the foundation amount and recommends a multi-year approach, with annual increases of at least \$1,000 until funding catches up with inflation (followed by ongoing inflation adjustments). Overall, the testimony frames ECS funding as necessary to support key priorities like early literacy, special education, teacher recruitment, and college and career readiness. While acknowledging that SB 7 is not a complete solution, CAPSS views it as an important step toward a more equitable education system.

Anthony Randazzo, Executive Director, Equable Institute

The Equable Institute submitted testimony on SB 7 and HB 5002 that supports the goal of educational equity but argues that true funding reform must address Connecticut's teacher pension system. The author explains that a significant portion of the state's education spending goes toward teacher pensions, which are currently fully funded by the state rather than shared with municipalities. This system creates inequities because pension contributions are tied to teacher salaries. This means that wealthier districts that pay higher salaries receive larger state pension subsidies per student than lower-income districts. The author recommends integrating pension costs into the broader education funding formula and gradually requiring districts to share in pension contributions. The testimony argues that any serious effort to achieve educational equity must include reform of the teacher pension funding system, which currently works against equitable resource distribution.

Tom Danehy, Executive Director, ACES

William Rice, Assistant Executive Director, ACES

ACES submitted testimony supporting both HB 5002 and SB 7, emphasizing that together they offer a path toward a more sustainable and equitable education funding system (particularly for magnet schools). The author supports SB 7's increase to the ECS foundation, stating that a stronger foundation amount enhances overall education funding and benefits magnet schools. However, he shares several key conditions for the bill's success: Maintain the existing \$12 million in magnet funding during the transition to avoid financial instability, ensure that as tuition

payments are phased out, state funding fully replaces those dollars, preserve student-need funding weights (for low-income and multilingual students), and maintain equitable funding rates for RESC-operated magnet schools. This testimony frames the bills as a potential “long-term commitment” to equitable funding, but states that careful implementation and sustained support are necessary to ensure success.

Constanza Segovia, Organizing Director, Connecticut for All

This testimony, from a Hartford parent and coalition leader, supports S.B. 7 but calls for stronger and more immediate action to fix Connecticut’s school funding system. The speaker argues that the current Education Cost Sharing (ECS) amount is outdated and should be significantly increased and tied to inflation. The author emphasizes that underfunding has led to inadequate resources in Hartford Public Schools, including staff cuts, limited programming, and insufficient support for students. The testimony criticizes both the ECS formula and broader tax policies for failing to meet students’ needs.

Ruchi Sheth, Research & Policy Associate, Connecticut Voices for Children

This testimony supports S.B. 7 but calls for more immediate action to fix Connecticut’s school funding system. The author argues that the current ECS foundation amount is outdated and should be significantly increased (to around \$16,525) and tied to inflation, rather than phased in. The author states that underfunding has led to inadequate resources in Hartford Public Schools, including staff cuts, limited programming, and insufficient support for students (especially those with special needs) forcing some families to seek education elsewhere. This testimony also opposes school choice policies like vouchers and charters, arguing they divert resources from public schools.

Tonishia Signore, Policy Director, She Leads Justice

This testimony from She Leads Justice supports S.B. 7 but calls for stronger, more immediate changes to the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) foundation amount. The testimony highlights major funding disparities between wealthy and lower-income districts, noting that under-resourced communities receive far less funding despite having greater needs. Overall, the testimony urges immediate investment and inflation indexing to ensure all students, regardless of zip code, have access to a fair and adequate education.

Jahneel Small, Chief of Staff, Educators for Excellence

This testimony, from an Educators for Excellence Connecticut leader and former school administrator, supports SB 311, HB 5002, and SB 7, emphasizing both discipline reform and increased school funding. It highlights that the ECS foundation amount has been frozen since 2013 and no longer reflects current costs. This leads to trade-offs like larger class sizes and fewer supports. While acknowledging recent increases in education funding, the author argues more is needed.

Hannah Spinner, Chair, CEA Aspiring Educators Program

This testimony supports S.B. 7’s proposal to provide stipends for student teachers but urges the state to expand it into a statewide paid student teaching program. The author explains that student teaching is a full-time, demanding professional experience, yet most student teachers receive no compensation. This creates significant financial burdens that can force candidates to take on debt, work extra jobs, delay graduation, or leave the profession altogether. This testimony emphasizes that providing universal paid student teaching would reduce financial barriers, promote equity, and strengthen and diversify Connecticut’s educator workforce.

Stephanie Wanzer, President, CES Education Association

Stephanie Wanzer, representing the Connecticut Education Association, expresses support for SB 7 and HB 5002 as important steps toward modernizing Connecticut's school funding system. She emphasizes that the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula was intended to ensure equity across districts, but its foundation amount has not been updated in over a decade and, it no longer reflects current educational costs. Drawing on their experience in special education, the author describes how budget constraints are forcing districts to bring high-needs students back from specialized placements prematurely, prioritizing cost savings over appropriate services and potentially harming student outcomes. While acknowledging that the bills may need refinement, she strongly supports their overall direction as a move toward a fairer, more stable, and equitable education funding system.

Aisha Alford, Art Teacher, Bridgeport Public Schools

This testimony supports updating the ECS formula to increase per-student funding and tie it to inflation. Testimony argues the current funding level is outdated and fails to reflect rising costs in staffing, special education, technology, and student services. The author states that this gap creates inequities, resource shortages, and difficulty meeting the needs of high-need students, especially in districts like Bridgeport. This support is based on the need for fair, accurate funding that reflects real costs and ensures all students receive adequate resources.

Janette Adams, Retired, Bridgeport Public Schools

Bruce Baines, Special ED Paraprofessional, Bridgeport Public Schools

Maricarmen Capeles, Parent, Bridgeport Public Schools

Maritza Estremera Jimenez, Secretary, Bridgeport Board of Education

Jermaine Jorge, Special Education Teacher, Bridgeport Public Schools

The author of this testimony supports Senate Bill ,7 however, urges increasing per-student funding to \$16,500. This testimony argues that declining resources have led to staff shortages, reduced student services, fewer extracurricular programs, and overwhelmed teachers dealing with overcrowded classrooms. The author also highlights that higher funding would improve student support, ease pressure on teachers, and reduce reliance on local property tax increases.

Geoffrey Bolte, Selectman, Town of Thompson

This testimony supports SB 7 because it would increase the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) foundation amount and help address years of underfunding that have not kept pace with inflation. The author argues that stagnant state funding has placed an unsustainable burden on local property taxpayers. While supportive, the testimony urges lawmakers to strengthen the bill by raising the foundation amount further to better reflect current costs and ensure truly equitable funding for all public schools.

Mark Benigni, Superintendent, Meriden Public Schools

This testimony supports because SB 007 aims to increase state education funding and strengthen the ECS formula, which the author views as necessary for districts like Meriden. However, the testimony emphasizes that the proposed funding increases are insufficient to close significant budget gaps, forcing cuts to staff, programs, and student supports. The author argues that without larger state investments, districts will continue to struggle with rising costs and may shift more burden onto local taxpayers.

Courtney Cardinal, ASTE Program Director, Killingly High School

This testimony supports the increasing and indexing of the ECS foundation amount and sustaining funding for Agricultural Science and Technology Education (ASTE) programs. The author emphasizes that choice programs like agricultural education are life-changing for students, fostering strong teacher-student relationships, peer connections, leadership development, and hands-on learning that leads to academic success. These programs also prepare students for careers in agriculture, environmental science, food systems, and biotechnology, supporting Connecticut's economy and workforce. H.B. 5002 and S.B. 7 are seen as critical steps toward equitable, fully funded education.

Stefanie Donahue, Board President, Odyssey Community School

This testimony supports both H.B. 5002 and SB 7 because they would increase the ECS foundation amount and adjust funding to reflect rising student needs and inflation. The author emphasizes that these bills are important steps toward a fair, need-based funding system and urges continued state investment to ensure educational equity across all districts.

Lisa Carroll Fabian, Educator, Fairfield CT

This author testified in support of updating the ECS formula. The author states that the foundation amount has remained \$11,525 since 2013, despite rising costs and growing student needs. They also note that funding gaps force cuts to critical staff and programs, widening achievement gaps. They urge the Committee to modernize ECS by increasing the foundation amount, adjusting for municipal capacity, and addressing special education costs to ensure all students have equitable access to education.

Justin Elicker, Mayor, City of New Haven

The author of this testimony supports SB 7 and H.B. 5002. These bills would increase and modernize the ECS foundation amount and help close the gap between current funding and actual student needs. While supportive, the author pushes for larger increases tied to inflation to fully address underfunding and relieve other municipal hardships.

John Ely, Executive Director, Project Oceanology

This testimony claims this bill promotes educational equity by strengthening access to shared, specialized programs like interdistrict cooperatives. The author highlights that programs such as Project Oceanology provide unique, high-cost STEM learning opportunities that individual districts could not afford on their own. So, this testimony further reinforces the importance of equitable state support.

Karen Helene, School Director, Benhaven School

This testimony supports H.B. 5329 and S.B. 7 (Section 6), emphasizing the bills critical role in helping private special education facilities in serving high-needs students with severe disabilities. Benhaven School is a CSDE-approved private special education program serving students with severe autism and intellectual disabilities who often have not succeeded in other settings. The testimony argues that including these schools in the proposed Innovation Grant would support specialized programming, improve student outcomes, and strengthen statewide capacity for the students who need it most. The testimony also shows support for student teacher stipends but criticizes their exclusion for placements in private special education programs.

David Henry, Principal, Bridgeport Public Schools

This individual's testimony states that Connecticut has the financial capacity to increase education funding but has failed to keep pace with rising costs since 2013. The author notes growing student needs, particularly in special education and bilingual services, especially in districts like Bridgeport. Overall, it urges increased state investment to ensure equitable and adequate funding for all students.

Christopher Trombly, Dean, College of Education at SCSU

This testimony supports the idea of paid student teaching in S.B. 7, noting that stipends would help aspiring educators (especially those without financial resources) complete their full-time placements without needing outside jobs, allowing them to focus on teaching and professional development. However, the author raises several concerns and argues that the program would create significant administrative burdens for the state and educator preparation programs without providing additional funding for staffing. It also highlights equity issues, noting that not all student teachers will be able to qualify for stipends due to placement requirements. Finally, the testimony points out that while the proposal supports future educators, it does not address the broader issue of retaining current teachers, emphasizing the need for improved compensation, and working conditions to reduce attrition.

Milly Arciniegas, Executive Director, Hartford Parent University

Supports this bill.

Sangeeta Bella, Executive Director, Bridgeport Public Schools

Supports this bill.

Stacy Bennett, Member, Woodstock CT EDC

Supports this bill.

Susan Bramhall, Member Leader, Jewish Voice for Peace

Supports this bill.

Monica Brase, North Star Fellowship, The Mind Trust

Supports this bill.

Estela Camacho, Family & Community Engagement, Danbury CT

Supports this bill.

Thomas Anderson, Superintendent, East Hartford Public Schools

Supports this bill.

Jamie Barr Shelburn, Member, East Lyme Board of Education

Supports this bill.

Matthew Bennett, Elected Member, Woodstock Board of Education

Supports this bill.

Frances Bousquet, Putman Board of Education

Supports this bill.

Christina Andrade, Math Tutor, Killingly Public Schools  
Supports this bill.

Danielle Avery, School Counselor & Parent, Trumbull Public Schools  
Supports this bill.

Keith Avery, Parent & Teacher, Trumbull Resident  
Supports this bill.

Brittany Blair, Teacher, Windham Public Schools  
Supports this bill.

Andrew Brien, Agriculture Teacher, Winsted CT  
Supports this bill.

Thomas Broderick, Town Councilor & Educator, Trumbull CT  
Supports this bill.

Anonymous, Student, Ledyard High School  
Supports this bill.

Anonymous, Student, Ledyard High School  
Supports this bill.

Abdellah Aly, Student Representative, New Haven Board of Education  
Supports this bill.

**297 Residents expressed support.**

**77 Anonymous testimonies expressed support.**

**The following 252 testimonies also expressed support:**

Sheetal Abbi // Ron Acosta, Hartford Public Schools // Evelyn Ahuatl // Emma Alamo // Crystal Aldophe // Maria Aljoburi // Leonard Bunnell Sr., Mayor, Montville CT // Genevieve Cabrera, Member, North Haven Board of Education // Elise Capraro, Educator Killingly CT // Bryan Chong, Organizer, Teamsters Local 671 // Deana Chrzan, Business Manager, Woodstock Public Schools // Kristine Cicchetti // Kristen Clark, Teacher, Multicultural Magnet // Ruby Clarke, Officer, Teamsters Local 671 // Chris Clouet, City Council, New London CT // Jacqueline Colantonio, ESL Teacher, Bridgeport Public Schools // Selina Conklin, Elementary Educator // Resident, Trumbull CT // Thomas Connolly, Volunteer, People's Center // Matthew Coppler, Town Manager, Town of Enfield // Michael Criss, First Selectman, Town of Harwinton // Erin Daly, Educator, Danbury CT // Sally Dastoli, Executive Director, Odyssey Community School // Lindsay Davis, Director of Early Childhood, Bridgeport Public Schools // Carlos de la Barrera, Principal, Windham Middle School // Paul Desautels // Gina Devlin, 6th Grade Teacher, Thompson Public Schools // Joesph DiBacco, Superintendent, Ansonia Public Schools // Gagnado Diedhiou, Yale

College Democrats // Keisha Domond, Teacher, Bridgeport Public Schools // Eric Downer, Officer, Teamsters Local 671 // Timothy Dutton, High School Teacher, Bridgeport // Vanessa Fasanella, Math Teacher // Heidi Fischkelta, PTO President // Douglas Foley, Councilman, Hamden Legislative Council // Cynthia Ford, Superintendent, Ashford Public Schools // Kerstin Forrester // Nick Frangiamore, Officer, Teamsters Local 671 // Joy Fredette // Alana Frenkel, Student, UConn School of Social Work // Matt Fried // Amanda Gabriele, Member, North Haven Board of Education // Marc Anthony Gallucci, Esq., Parent, Bridgeport Aquaculture School // Andrea Gartner, Councilwoman, City of Danbury // Ashley Gaudiano, Chair, Town of Trumbull Council // Lee Goldstein, Chair, Westport Board of Education // Diane Goodrich, City of Bridgeport BOE // Jenny Graves, Vice President, New Haven Federation of Teachers // Sonia Greene, Board of Education Chairperson, Woodstock CT // Brian Greenleaf, Chief Financial Officer, EASTCONN // Aimee Guerrero, Teacher, Bridgeport Public Schools // Stacey Guerin, Educator, Lisbon CT // Michele Guglielmo, Public School Educator, North Haven CT // Ashley Gulyas, Member, Norwalk Board of Education // Brett Gustafson, Principal, Bridgeport Public Schools // Mark Harp, Lighthouse // Emily Hayden, Member, Woodstock Board of Education // Jeffrey Helming, Educator, Newington CT // Brian Hendrickson, Superintendent, Salem School District // Amilcar Hernandez, Chief Financial Officer, New Haven Public Schools // Aracely Hidalgo, Make the Road CT // Alyssa Himmel, Tashua Schools PTA VP of Fundraising, Trumbull CT // Frederick Hodges, Director of Community Relations, Family Reentry CRJ // William Howery, Tisdale School // Caitlin Hughes, Northeast CT // Luanelly Iglesias, Educator, Danbury CT // Mary Isaac, Trumbull Town Council // Tracy Jenkins, Educator, Danbury CT // Dan Jerram, First Selectman, Town of New Hartford // Courtney Johnson // Wendy Johnson, Teacher, Bridgeport CT // Sandy Jones, Educator, Bridgeport Public Schools // Daniel Juarez, Member New Haven Board of Education // Elizabeth Juselis, Trumbull Public Schools // Peter Karaffa, Chief Information Officer, Bridgeport Public School // Jacqueline Knapp, Literacy Consultant, Trumbull Public Schools // Joseph Kobza, Superintendent, Monroe Public Schools // John LaBelle, Member, Killingly Town Council // Deana Landeen, Educator, Bridgeport Public Schools // Kelli Langer, Business Educator, Thompson Public Schools // Susan Lannon, Chair, Killingly Board of Education // Diane LaPine, City Councilwoman, Danbury // John Laughinghouse, City Councilman, Ward City // Devin Lawless, Teacher, New Haven // Maureen Lazarus, Educator, New London CT // Julie Leduc, Employee, Putnam Middle School // Corie Linkin, KPS, Windham County // Alison Lizardi, Graduate Student, Southern Connecticut State University // Estela Lopez-Espelin, LCSW, Clinton CT // Fernando Lopez, Policy & Strategy Fellow, ConnCAN // Marta Lopez, Make the Road // Heather Lorenz, Educator, Danbury CT // Julie Luby, Superintendent, Winchester Public Schools // Aurelia Luna, 8th Grade Student, Barrows STEM Academy // Megan Lurvey // Joseph Macary Ed.D., Superintendent, Vernon // Ruth MacDonald, Professor & Union Delegate, Charter Oak State College // Emily MacMelburn, // Teacher, New Haven Public Schools // Massimo Mallozzi, Member, Trumbull Board of Education // Averitt Mancini, Teacher, Meriden CT // Daira Marin, Youth Power Strategist, Make the

Road CT // Gloria Marion, Selectwoman, Northeast CT // Rev. Digna Marte, Principal, Bridgeport Public Schools // Cassidy Martin, Board Chair, Scotland Elementary School // Krista Martineau, Superintendent of Schools, Westbrook Public Schools // Chrisliany Martinez, 7th Grade Student, Windham Public Schools // Tracey McDougall, Executive Director, Connecticut Farm Bureau // Kelsey McGuire, Educator, South Windsor // Lainie McHugh, Chair, Trumbull Board of Finance // Michele McKinley, Chief of Special Education, Bridgeport Public Schools // Kim McLaughlin, CT for All // John McNamara, Majority Leader, New Britain Common Council // Jamie McPhail, New Haven Rising, New Haven CT // Dree Michael McWeeney, Assistant Professor, CT State College // William Mecca, Educator, Trumbull CT // Lauren Meli, Social Worker // Nina Merkin, Resident & Teacher, Trumbull CT // Rebecca Mickelson, NHFT 933 Freedom to Learn JVP // Steven Moccio, Superintendent of Schools, Enfield Public Schools // Miranda Monfilston, Parent, Hartford Public Schools // Patricia Moonan, Member, Shelton Board of Education // David Moran, Agriscience Teacher, Housatonic Valley Regional HS // Michael Morrill, BOE Member, Putnam School District // Louise Morrison, Educator, Brooklyn CT // Corey Moses, First Vice President, Hartford Federation of Teachers // Benjamin N // Nayeli Nadal, Student, Windham CT // Sue Nash, Superintendent, Killingly Public Schools // Dr. Madeline Negrón, Superintendent, New Haven Public Schools // Kelly Newton, Teacher, Bridgeport Public Schools // Stefanie Nicholas, Social Worker, Bridgeport Public Schools // Maureen Nichoson, First Selectman, Town of Pomfret // Patricia Nicolari, Executive Director, Proud Academy // Mary Njeri, Paraprofessional, Trumbull Board of Education // Natasha Noel, Bernard Buddy Jordan Foundation // Jose Ortiz, Exec. Director of School Turnaround, Bridgeport Public Schools // Nicole Paradise // Sheila Partlow, Parent, Putnam CT // Carla Pereira, Educator, Danbury CT // Cristher Estrada-Perez, Hartford Board of Education // Jennifer Perez, Chair, Bridgeport Board of Education // Jason Poppa, Educator, Bridgeport CT // Shaylene Portuguese, 11th Grade Student, Windham High School // Stacy Powell, Parent & Teacher, Trumbull CT // Jill Powers, Board Chair, Stratford BOE // Jacqueline Prieto, ML Teacher & Parent, Trumbull Public Schools // Theresa Purdie, Teacher, City of New Haven BOE // Santiago Quiroz Torillo, 11th Grade Student, Windham High School // Joseph Raiola, Principal, Bridgeport Public Schools // Dr. Laly Noya Rakotoniaina, Teacher, Hartford Public Schools // Jannine Ramirez Gutierrez, Student, SCSU MSW // Emanuel Ramos Torres, 11th Grade Student, Windham High School // Damian Reardon, Principal, West Vine Street Schools // Robert Reda, Teacher, Madison Middle School // Ellen Retelle, Business Manager, Integrated Day Charter School // Shirley Ricart, Director, Bridgeport Public Schools // Steven Rioux, Superintendent, Putnam Public Schools // Cynthia Ritchie, Superintendent of Schools, New London Public Schools // Holly Robinson, Councilwoman, City of Danbury // Omayra Robledo, Advanced Year MSW Student, UConn School of Social Work // Christopher Roche, Superintendent of Schools, Woodstock Public Schools // Erin Rooney, Teacher, Town of Trumbull CT // Emily Rose, Educator, Danbury CT // Jennifer Rucci, Salem Board of Education // Barbra Ruggiero, Executive Director, Brass City Charter // Christopher Rusaw, Educator, Plainfield CT // Karen Ryker,

Citizen, Woodstock CT // Alderman Francisco Santiago, New Britain CT // Heather Santos, Member, Thompson Board of Education // Joanna Sargent // Ellen Sassu, Mayor, Bristol CT // Kristen Scanlon, President, West Haven Federation of Teachers (WHFT) // Darren Schwartz, Superintendent, Waterbury Public Schools // Lianna Schwartz // Julian Shafer, Educator, Danbury CT // Mr. David Sharron, Meriden Public Schools // Hazel Sheridan, Student, Nathan Hale Arts Magnet School // Christopher Siano, Employee, Bridgeport Public Schools // Obed Sierra, CT for All // Melinda Smith, Superintendent, Thompson Public Schools // Joseph Sokolovic, Vice Chair, Bridgeport Board of Education // Jeffrey Sousa, Superintendent, New Hartford Public Schools // Mr. Aaron Stark, Special Education Teacher, Bridgeport CT // Rev. Dr. Kelcy Steele, Pastor, Varick AME Zion // Alish Stripling, Director of Finance & Personnel, Stonington Public Schools // Alicia Strong, Co-Director, NBRJC // Christopher Sung, Social Studies Teacher, Hartford Public Schools // Susan Swan // Caroline Tanbee Smith, Alder of Ward 9, Board of Alders // Sheanna Taylor, Educator, Bridgeport Board of Education // Cecil Tengtenga, Associate Director, CT AHEC // Bryan Terry, Physician, NEMG // Vicki Tesoro, First Selectman, Trumbull CT // Portia Thiam, Science Director, Bridgeport Public Schools // Douglas Thompson, First Selectman, Town of Burlington CT // Nathan Tinker, Member, Trumbull Board of Finance // Joanne Tolles, Educator, Danbury CT // Stratford Town Council // Jonathan Tuminski // Sophia Tuozzoli, Master of Social Work, SCSU // Charise Turner, New Haven Public Schools // Tina Ulreich, Principal on Special Assignment, Bridgeport Public Schools // Timothy Van Tassel, Superintendent of Schools, East Hampton Public Schools // Jessica Vargas, Alderwoman, City of New Britain // Krista Vermeal, Teacher & Union Leader // Tony Violano, Educator, Danbury CT // Dr. Kim Walker, Chair, Westbrook Board of Education // Brianna Walsh, Funding for CT Public Schools // Tiffany Washington, Teacher, Hartford Public Schools // David Weinreb, Magnet Resource Teacher, New Haven Federation of Teachers // Marot Weiss // Susan Wells // Dr. Marissa White, Principal, Hartford Public Schools // Iris White, Superintendent of Schools, Bristol Public Schools // Hannah Whitley, Deputy Grants Director, Bridgeport Public Schools // Patricia Widmayer, Educator Danbury CT // Matthew Wilcox, Vice President, New Haven Board of Education // Wynn Wilcox // Kevin Williams, Teacher, Danbury CT // Mairym Williams, Special Ed Paraprofessional, Bridgeport Public Schools // Clea Wilson, Parent, Bridgeport CT // Magi Winslow, First Selectman, Town of Hartland // Lori Woodruff, Educator, Danbury CT // Andrew Yackel, Organizer, Teamsters Local 671 // Jill Zangerl, Chairperson, Putnam Board of Education // Val Zhukov, Officer, Teamsters Local 671 // Lisa Zielinski, Teacher & Librarian, Trumbull Public Schools // Lori Zornado // Paul Zulpa, First Selectman, Town of Woodbury // Janette Adams, Retired, Bridgeport Public Schools // Bruce Baines, Special ED Paraprofessional, Bridgeport Public Schools // Maricarmen Capeles, Parent, Bridgeport Public Schools // Maritza Estremera Jimenez, Secretary, Bridgeport Board of Education // Jermaine Jorge, Special Education Teacher, Bridgeport Public Schools // Kevin Bishop, Selectman, Town of Winchester // Lois Boisvert, CFO, Newington Public Schools // Dorinda Borer, Mayor, City of West Haven // Paul Brenton, Superintendent, Plainfield Public

Schools // Bobbi Brown, President, Greater Bridgeport NAACP // Maureen Brummett, Superintendent, Newington Public Schools // Mary Calorio, Town Administrator, Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments // Shari Cantor, Mayor, Town of West Hartford // Chad Cardillo, Councilor at Large, City of Meriden // Dr. Kara Casimiro, Superintendent, Danbury Public Schools // Matthew Conway, Superintendent, Derby Public Schools // Ryan Donlon, Associate Executive Director, LEARN // Charles Dumais, Executive Director, Cooperative Educational Services // Joseph Ganim, Mayor, City of Bridgeport // Gail Heath, Admin Assistant, CABA // Daniel Pearson, Executive Director, Educators for Excellence // Robert Phillips, Executive Director, NHCOC Coalition // Frank Redente, Alder Ward 15, Board of Alders

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None expressed for SB. 7

**GENERAL COMMENTS:**

None expressed for SB. 7

**Reported by: ReAnna Jean Adams**

**Date: 4/16/26**