



General Assembly

February Session, 2026

Raised Bill No. 5004

LCO No. 2076



Referred to Committee on COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN

Introduced by:
(KID)

**AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD WELFARE ACCOUNTABILITY AND
TRANSPARENCY.**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Subsection (c) of section 17a-114 of the 2026 supplement to
2 the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu
3 thereof (*Effective October 1, 2026*):

4 (c) (1) Notwithstanding the requirements of subsection (b) of this
5 section, the commissioner [may] shall make an emergency placement of
6 a child with a relative or fictive kin caregiver who has not been issued a
7 license or approval, [when] if such emergency placement is in the best
8 interests of the child, provided a satisfactory home visit is conducted
9 and a basic assessment of the family is completed. When the
10 commissioner makes such an emergency placement, the commissioner
11 shall (A) request a criminal justice agency to perform a federal name-
12 based criminal history search of such relative or fictive kin caregiver and
13 each person eighteen years of age or older residing in the home, and (B)
14 check the state child abuse and neglect registry established pursuant to
15 section 17a-101k for the name of such relative or fictive kin caregiver

16 and each person eighteen years of age or older residing in the home. The
17 results of such name-based search shall be provided to the
18 commissioner.

19 (2) Not later than ten calendar days after a name-based search is
20 performed pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection, the
21 commissioner shall request the State Police Bureau of Identification to
22 perform a state and national criminal history records checks of such
23 relative or fictive kin caregiver and each person eighteen years of age or
24 older residing in the home, in accordance with section 29-17a. Such
25 criminal history records checks shall be deemed as required by this
26 section for the purposes of section 29-17a and the commissioner may
27 request that such criminal history records checks be performed in
28 accordance with subsection (c) of said section. The results of such
29 criminal history records checks shall be provided to the commissioner.
30 If any person refuses to provide fingerprints or other positive
31 identifying information for the purposes of such criminal history
32 records checks when requested, the commissioner shall immediately
33 remove the child from the home.

34 (3) If the commissioner denies an emergency placement with a
35 relative or fictive kin caregiver or removes a child from such home based
36 on the results of a federal name-based criminal history search performed
37 pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection, the person whose name-
38 based search was the basis for such denial or removal may contest such
39 denial or removal by requesting that state and national criminal history
40 records checks be performed pursuant to subdivision (2) of this
41 subsection. Upon the denial of an emergency placement with a relative
42 or fictive kin caregiver or removal of a child from such relative or fictive
43 kin caregiver's home, the commissioner shall document, in writing, the
44 reason for such denial or removal. If a child is placed in the home of a
45 person who is not a relative or fictive kin caregiver, the commissioner
46 shall confirm, in writing, that such placement, rather than placement
47 with a relative or fictive kin caregiver, serves the best interests of such
48 child.

49 (4) Any such relative or fictive kin caregiver who accepts placement
50 of a child shall be subject to licensure by the commissioner, pursuant to
51 regulations adopted by the commissioner in accordance with the
52 provisions of chapter 54, to implement the provisions of this section or
53 approval by a child-placing agency licensed pursuant to section 17a-149.
54 The commissioner may grant a waiver from such regulations, including
55 any standard regarding separate bedrooms or room-sharing
56 arrangements, for a child placed with a relative or fictive kin caregiver,
57 on a case-by-case basis, if such placement is otherwise in the best
58 interests of such child, provided no procedure or standard that is safety-
59 related may be so waived. The commissioner shall document, in writing,
60 the reason for granting any waiver from such regulations.

61 Sec. 2. Subsection (b) of section 46b-129 of the 2026 supplement to the
62 general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu
63 thereof (*Effective October 1, 2026*):

64 (b) If it appears from the specific allegations of the petition and other
65 verified affirmations of fact accompanying the petition and application,
66 or subsequent thereto, that there is reasonable cause to believe that (1)
67 the child or youth is suffering from serious physical illness or serious
68 physical injury or is in immediate physical danger from the child's or
69 youth's surroundings, and (2) as a result of said conditions, the child's
70 or youth's safety is endangered and immediate removal from such
71 surroundings is necessary to ensure the child's or youth's safety, the
72 court shall either (A) issue an order to the parents or other person
73 having responsibility for the care of the child or youth to appear at such
74 time as the court may designate to determine whether the court should
75 vest the child's or youth's temporary care and custody in a person
76 related to the child or youth by blood or marriage, a fictive kin caregiver,
77 as defined in section 17a-114, as amended by this act, or [in] some other
78 person or suitable agency pending disposition of the petition, or (B)
79 issue an order ex parte vesting the child's or youth's temporary care and
80 custody in a person related to the child or youth by blood or marriage,
81 a fictive kin caregiver or [in] some other person or suitable agency. A

82 preliminary hearing on any ex parte custody order or order to appear
83 issued by the court shall be held not later than ten days after the issuance
84 of such order. The service of such orders may be made by any officer
85 authorized by law to serve process, or by any probation officer
86 appointed in accordance with section 46b-123, investigator from the
87 Department of Administrative Services, state or local police officer or
88 indifferent person. Such orders shall include a conspicuous notice to the
89 respondent written in clear and simple language containing at least the
90 following information: (i) That the order contains allegations that
91 conditions in the home have endangered the safety and welfare of the
92 child or youth; (ii) that a hearing will be held on the date on the form;
93 (iii) that the hearing is the opportunity to present the parents' position
94 concerning the alleged facts; (iv) that an attorney will be appointed for
95 parents who cannot afford an attorney; (v) that such parents may apply
96 for a court-appointed attorney by going in person to the court address
97 on the form and are advised to go as soon as possible in order for the
98 attorney to prepare for the hearing; (vi) that such parents, or a person
99 having responsibility for the care and custody of the child or youth, may
100 request the Commissioner of Children and Families to investigate
101 placing the child or youth with a person related to the child or youth by
102 blood or marriage or a fictive kin caregiver who might serve as a
103 licensed foster parent or temporary custodian for such child or youth.
104 The commissioner shall investigate any relative or relatives or fictive kin
105 caregiver proposed to serve as a licensed foster parent or temporary
106 custodian for such child or youth prior to the preliminary hearing and
107 provide a preliminary report to the court at such hearing as to such
108 relative's or relatives' or caregiver's suitability and any potential barriers
109 to licensing such relative or relatives or caregiver as a foster parent or
110 parents or granting temporary custody of such child or youth to such
111 relative or relatives or caregiver; and (vii) that if such parents have any
112 questions concerning the case or appointment of counsel, any such
113 parent is advised to go to the court or call the clerk's office at the court
114 as soon as possible. Upon application for appointed counsel, the court
115 shall promptly determine eligibility and, if the respondent is eligible,

116 promptly appoint counsel. The expense for any temporary care and
117 custody shall be paid by the town in which such child or youth is at the
118 time residing, and such town shall be reimbursed for such expense by
119 the town found liable for the child's or youth's support, except that
120 where a state agency has filed a petition pursuant to the provisions of
121 subsection (a) of this section, the agency shall pay such expense. The
122 agency shall give primary consideration to placing the child or youth
123 with a relative or fictive kin caregiver. If such placement with a relative
124 or fictive kin caregiver is denied, the agency shall give secondary
125 consideration to placing the child or youth in the town where such child
126 or youth resides. The agency shall file in writing with the clerk of the
127 court the reasons for placing the child or youth in a particular placement
128 with a person other than a relative or fictive kin caregiver or outside the
129 town where the child or youth resides, as applicable. If such child or
130 youth is placed with a person other than a relative or fictive kin
131 caregiver, such writing shall include confirmation that the placement
132 selected for such child or youth, rather than placement with a relative
133 or fictive kin caregiver, serves the best interests of such child or youth.
134 Upon issuance of an ex parte order, the court shall provide to the
135 commissioner and the parent or guardian specific steps necessary for
136 each to take to address the ex parte order for the parent or guardian to
137 retain or regain custody of the child or youth. Upon the issuance of such
138 order, or not later than sixty days after the issuance of such order, the
139 court shall make a determination whether the Department of Children
140 and Families made reasonable efforts to keep the child or youth with his
141 or her parents or guardian prior to the issuance of such order and, if
142 such efforts were not made, whether such reasonable efforts were not
143 possible, taking into consideration the child's or youth's best interests,
144 including the child's or youth's health and safety. Any person or agency
145 in which the temporary care and custody of a child or youth is vested
146 under this section shall have the following rights and duties regarding
147 the child or youth: (I) The obligation of care and control; (II) the
148 authority to make decisions regarding emergency medical,
149 psychological, psychiatric or surgical treatment; and (III) such other

150 rights and duties that the court having jurisdiction may order.

151 Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) Not later than January 1, 2027,
152 the Commissioner of Children and Families shall establish and
153 administer a program to pay stipends to employees of the Department
154 of Children and Families who lead certain courses offered by the
155 department to individuals or the parents or guardians of individuals
156 receiving protective services, as defined in section 17a-93 of the general
157 statutes, or who are under protective supervision, as defined in section
158 17a-93 of the general statutes. The commissioner shall (1) compile a list
159 of the courses for which stipends shall be paid, with priority given to
160 those courses for which the demand is greater than current course
161 availability and that the commissioner determines are most beneficial to
162 families and children in the state, and (2) determine the amount of the
163 stipend to be paid to each employee.

164 Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) As used in this section,
165 "caregiver" means (1) a caregiver, as defined in section 17a-126 of the
166 general statutes, (2) an individual who has accepted emergency
167 placement of a child pursuant to section 17a-114 of the general statutes,
168 as amended by this act, and (3) a parent anticipating near-term
169 reunification with such parent's child.

170 (b) There is established a grant program to provide grant payments
171 to caregivers for clothing, food, safety-related purchases and other
172 necessities for children.

173 (c) Not later than January 1, 2027, the Commissioner of Children and
174 Families shall develop (1) an application process, (2) eligibility criteria
175 for caregivers, (3) guidelines for the appropriate expenditure of grant
176 payments by recipients, and (4) a formula for the distribution of such
177 grant payments, which formula shall include the maximum grant
178 payment available to any recipient. Priority for such grant payments
179 shall be given to caregivers who are eligible for foster care maintenance
180 payments or a guardianship subsidy but have not yet received an initial

181 payment or subsidy.

182 (d) Each recipient of a grant payment under this section shall file an
183 expenditure report with the Commissioner of Children and Families at
184 such time and in such manner as the commissioner prescribes. Such
185 recipients shall refund to the department any amounts not expended in
186 accordance with the guidelines developed by the commissioner
187 pursuant to subsection (c) of this section.

188 (e) Not later than January 1, 2028, and annually thereafter, the
189 Commissioner of Children and Families shall submit a report to the
190 Department of Children and Families Oversight Committee, established
191 pursuant to section 20 of this act, and, in accordance with the provisions
192 of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee
193 of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to
194 children. Such report shall include, for the preceding year, the number
195 of applications received by the department, the number of grant
196 payments provided and the amount of each such grant payment.

197 Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) As used in this section, "after
198 school program" means a program that takes place after regular school
199 hours and provides educational, enrichment and recreational activities
200 for children in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, and
201 "caregivers" has the same meaning as provided in section 17a-126 of the
202 general statutes.

203 (b) There is established a grant program to provide grant payments
204 to caregivers for all or a portion of costs associated with after school
205 programs for children placed in the care of such caregivers by the
206 Commissioner of Children and Families.

207 (c) Not later than January 1, 2027, the Commissioner of Children and
208 Families shall develop (1) an application process, (2) eligibility criteria
209 for caregivers, (3) guidelines for the appropriate expenditure of grant
210 payments by recipients, and (4) a formula for the distribution of such
211 grant payments, which formula shall include the maximum grant

212 payment available to any recipient. Priority for such grant payments
213 shall be given to caregivers who are eligible for foster care maintenance
214 payments or a guardianship subsidy but have not yet received an initial
215 payment or subsidy.

216 (d) Each recipient of a grant payment under this section shall file an
217 expenditure report with the Commissioner of Children and Families at
218 such time and in such manner as the commissioner prescribes. Such
219 recipients shall refund to the department any amounts not expended in
220 accordance with the guidelines developed by the commissioner
221 pursuant to subsection (c) of this section.

222 (e) Not later than January 1, 2028, and annually thereafter, the
223 Commissioner of Children and Families shall submit a report to the
224 Child Welfare Policy and Oversight Committee, established pursuant to
225 section 20 of this act, and, in accordance with the provisions of section
226 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee of the
227 General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children.
228 Such report shall include, for the preceding year, the number of
229 applications received by the department, the number of grant payments
230 provided and the amount of each such grant payment.

231 Sec. 6. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) As used in this section,
232 "relevant field" means social work, applied sociology, child
233 development, child welfare, clinical psychology, counseling, human
234 development and family studies, human services, marriage and family
235 therapy, nursing, social services, education and criminal justice.

236 (b) Not later than January 1, 2027, the Department of Children and
237 Families, in consultation with institutions of higher education in the
238 state, shall establish a prospective social worker internship program that
239 includes opportunities for internship experiences, job shadowing,
240 support and coaching, and offers participants insight into the
241 professional challenges and rewards associated with social work over
242 the course of not less than one academic semester. The department shall

243 (1) establish (A) an application process and criteria for acceptance in
244 such program, which criteria shall include, but not be limited to, a
245 requirement that participants are enrolled in a bachelor's or master's
246 degree program in a relevant field, and (B) criteria for the selection of
247 mentors who are employed by the department as social workers, and
248 recruit such employees to participate as mentors in the program.

249 (c) Not later than January 1, 2027, the Department of Children and
250 Families shall establish a first-year social worker mentorship program
251 for newly hired social workers employed by the department. Such
252 program shall include opportunities for job shadowing, support and
253 coaching during each participant's first year of employment as a social
254 worker by the department. The department shall establish (1) an
255 application process and criteria for acceptance in such program, and (2)
256 criteria for the selection of experienced social workers employed by the
257 department to serve as mentors, and recruit such employees to
258 participate as mentors in the program.

259 (d) The Department of Children and Families shall pay a stipend to
260 each intern, mentee and mentor who successfully completes the
261 internship and mentorship programs described in subsections (b) and
262 (c) of this section.

263 Sec. 7. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) Not later than January 1, 2028,
264 the Commissioner of Children and Families, in consultation with the
265 Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services, shall develop
266 and provide a mandatory educational training program for employees
267 of the Department of Children and Families concerning (1) perinatal
268 mood and anxiety disorders, and (2) trauma-informed, nonstigmatizing
269 practices for interacting with individuals suffering from such disorders.
270 Such training program shall (A) include guidance to such employees
271 concerning such disorders and practices, and (B) be offered not less than
272 once every six months thereafter. Each person employed by the
273 department shall complete such training program at least once.
274 Employees hired prior to January 1, 2028, shall complete such training

275 program not later than December 31, 2028. Employees hired on or after
276 January 1, 2028, shall complete such training not later than one year after
277 beginning such employment.

278 Sec. 8. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) Not later than January 1, 2028,
279 the Commissioner of Children and Families shall, in consultation with
280 the executive director of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors,
281 Equity and Opportunity, established pursuant to section 2-127 of the
282 general statutes, develop and provide a mandatory educational training
283 program for employees of the Department of Children and Families
284 concerning human trafficking and trauma-informed, nonstigmatizing
285 practices for interacting with child and adult victims of human
286 trafficking. Such training program shall (1) include guidance to such
287 employees concerning such practices, and (2) be offered not less than
288 once every six months thereafter. Each person employed by the
289 department shall complete such training program at least once.
290 Employees hired prior to January 1, 2028, shall complete such training
291 program not later than December 31, 2028. Employees hired on or after
292 January 1, 2028, shall complete such training not later than one year after
293 beginning such employment.

294 Sec. 9. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) Not later than January 1, 2028,
295 the Commissioner of Children and Families shall develop and provide
296 a mandatory educational training program for employees of the
297 Department of Children and Families concerning cultural sensitivity in
298 the delivery of the department's services and implicit bias, as defined in
299 section 19a-490u of the general statutes. Such training shall (1) include
300 guidance to such employees concerning such issues, and (2) be offered
301 not less than once every six months thereafter. Each person employed
302 by the department shall complete such training program not less than
303 once every two years. Employees hired prior to January 1, 2028, shall
304 initially complete such training program not later than December 31,
305 2028. Employees hired on or after January 1, 2028, shall initially
306 complete such training not later than one year after beginning such
307 employment.

308 Sec. 10. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) As used in this section,
309 "postsecondary education" means any program that leads to an
310 academic degree or certification in a vocation or employment training.

311 (b) Not later than January 1, 2027, the Department of Children and
312 Families shall establish a postsecondary education grant program for
313 the purpose of providing grant payments to fund the postsecondary
314 education of youths committed to the department who consent to
315 remain in the care of the Commissioner of Children and Families upon
316 reaching eighteen years of age pursuant to section 46b-129 of the general
317 statutes, as amended by this act. The department shall establish (1) an
318 application process, (2) a list of postsecondary education programs
319 approved by the department, (3) a formula for the distribution of such
320 grant payments, and (4) eligibility criteria for such youths, provided no
321 such youth shall participate in the program for the first time after such
322 youth reaches twenty-one years of age, but any such youth who
323 participates in such program prior to turning twenty-one years of age
324 may continue to participate until the completion of such youth's
325 postsecondary education program or such youth reaches twenty-three
326 years of age, whichever occurs earlier. The department shall require any
327 youth participating in the program to complete for each year such youth
328 is enrolled in postsecondary education, as a condition to such
329 participation, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and
330 applications for any appropriate scholarships and grants, including, but
331 not limited to, through any scholarship application portal administered
332 by the provider of such postsecondary education.

333 (c) Not later than January 1, 2028, and annually thereafter, the
334 Department of Children and Families shall submit a report to the Child
335 Welfare Policy and Oversight Committee, established pursuant to
336 section 20 of this act, and, in accordance with the provisions of section
337 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee of the
338 General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children.
339 Such report shall include, for the preceding year, the number of
340 applications received by the department, the number of grant payments

341 provided and the amount of each such grant payment.

342 Sec. 11. (*Effective October 1, 2026*) Not later than January 1, 2028, the
343 Auditors of Public Accounts shall conduct a performance audit, as
344 defined in section 2-09c of the general statutes, of the postsecondary
345 education grant program established pursuant to section 10 of this act.
346 Said auditors shall conduct such performance audit in accordance with
347 generally accepted government auditing standards or by another
348 method said auditors deem appropriate. Said auditors shall submit a
349 report, in accordance with section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the
350 joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of
351 matters relating to children, including such audit and any
352 recommendations for improving the administrative efficiency or
353 effectiveness of such program.

354 Sec. 12. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) Not later than January 1, 2027,
355 the Department of Children and Families shall establish an Internet web
356 site that is distinct from the department's Internet web site and includes
357 the following:

358 (1) A public, online dashboard to provide real-time information
359 concerning the department's administration of and performance with
360 respect to the state-wide program of services described in section 17a-3
361 of the general statutes. Such information shall include, but need not be
362 limited to, the information identified by the working group established
363 pursuant to section 13 of this act. Such dashboard shall (A) be integrated
364 with any electronic data collection and tracking tools utilized by the
365 department to ensure that such information is consistently and
366 continually updated, and (B) present such information in a manner that
367 permits users to access and understand such information without
368 specialized knowledge or training.

369 (2) Information for the public concerning offices, programs and
370 services administered and offered by the department, including, but not
371 limited to, the Office of Community Relations, housing and

372 homelessness programs, the Careline established pursuant to section
373 17a-103a of the general statutes and text message programs.

374 (3) Information concerning the identification of child abuse and
375 neglect and how to report child abuse and neglect to the department.

376 (4) The educational training program developed pursuant to section
377 17a-101 of the general statutes, in a video format that members of the
378 public may access without creating a username or password for use on
379 such Internet web site.

380 Sec. 13. (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a working
381 group to identify information to be included on the online dashboard
382 established pursuant to section 12 of this act concerning the Department
383 of Children and Families' administration of and performance with
384 respect to the state-wide program of services described in section 17a-3
385 of the general statutes.

386 (b) The working group shall consist of the following members: (1)
387 Members of the General Assembly, as designated by the chairpersons of
388 the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having
389 cognizance of matters relating to children; (2) the Commissioner of
390 Children and Families, or the commissioner's designee; and (3) any
391 individuals such chairpersons deem relevant and necessary to carry out
392 the duties of the working group.

393 (c) The administrative staff of the joint standing committee of the
394 General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children
395 shall serve as administrative staff of the working group.

396 (d) Not later than October 1, 2026, the working group shall submit a
397 report on its findings, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a
398 of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee of the General
399 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children. The
400 working group shall terminate on the date that it submits such report or
401 October 1, 2026, whichever is later.

402 Sec. 14. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) Upon the removal by, or
403 caused by a parent or guardian of a child who is under protective
404 supervision, as defined in section 17a-93 of the general statutes, or who
405 is receiving protective services, as defined in section 17a-93 of the
406 general statutes, to a jurisdiction outside the state for a period of more
407 than fourteen days, the Commissioner of Children and Families shall, if
408 such child's location is known, (1) contact the child welfare agency of
409 such jurisdiction to (A) provide information concerning such child's
410 location and status, (B) request that such agency conduct an in-person
411 visit to such child's location for the purpose of evaluating such child's
412 safety, and (C) if such agency indicates they will conduct or have
413 conducted such in-person visit, contact such agency to discuss such
414 agency's findings, and (2) conduct an in-person visit to evaluate such
415 child's safety or, if such in-person visit is not feasible, a visit by means
416 of a video conferencing platform. If after an in-person visit or visit by
417 means of a video conferencing platform conducted pursuant to
418 subdivision (2) of this section, the commissioner has reasonable cause to
419 suspect or believe such child (i) has been abused or neglected, as
420 described in section 46b-120 of the general statutes, (ii) has had a
421 nonaccidental physical injury, or injury that is at variance with the
422 history given of such injury, inflicted upon such child, or (iii) is at
423 imminent risk of serious harm, the commissioner shall notify such
424 agency of such suspicion or belief.

425 Sec. 15. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) Evidence that the parent or
426 guardian of a child has voluntarily sought treatment from or is being
427 voluntarily treated by a mental health professional for mental health
428 concerns, including, but not limited to, a perinatal mood or anxiety
429 disorder, shall not form the sole or primary basis for any action or
430 proceeding by the Department of Children and Families, provided
431 nothing in this section shall preclude any action or proceeding by such
432 department based on harm or risk of harm to a child or the use of
433 information concerning such treatment in any action or proceeding
434 where authorized.

435 Sec. 16. Subsection (b) of section 17a-101g of the general statutes is
436 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October*
437 *1, 2026*):

438 (b) The Commissioner of Children and Families shall establish
439 protocols for the investigation of and response to reports of child abuse
440 or neglect of children from birth to three years of age. Such protocols
441 shall include, but need not be limited to, (1) appropriate supervision of
442 the case, (2) appropriate visitation by department personnel to such
443 children, (3) documentation of case activities relevant to the safety and
444 well-being of such children, and (4) a case supervision tool specific to
445 the unique needs and risk status of children from birth to three years of
446 age. All investigations of a report of child abuse or neglect pursuant to
447 this section shall include a home visit at which the child and any siblings
448 are observed, if appropriate, a determination of the nature, extent and
449 cause or causes of the reported abuse or neglect, a determination of the
450 person or persons suspected to be responsible for such abuse or neglect,
451 the name, age and condition of other children residing in the same
452 household and an evaluation of the parents and the home. During any
453 such observation, department personnel shall consider any opinions
454 expressed by the child or other children residing in the household
455 concerning whether such child was abused or neglected. The report of
456 such investigation shall be in writing. The investigation shall also
457 include, but not be limited to, a review of criminal conviction
458 information concerning the person or persons alleged to be responsible
459 for such abuse or neglect and previous allegations of abuse or neglect
460 relating to the child or other children residing in the household or
461 relating to family violence. After an investigation into a report of abuse
462 or neglect has been completed, the commissioner shall determine, based
463 upon a standard of reasonable cause, whether a child has been abused
464 or neglected, as defined in section 46b-120. If the commissioner
465 determines that abuse or neglect has occurred, the commissioner shall
466 also determine whether: (A) There is an identifiable person responsible
467 for such abuse or neglect; and (B) such identifiable person poses a risk

468 to the health, safety or well-being of children and should be
469 recommended by the commissioner for placement on the child abuse
470 and neglect registry established pursuant to section 17a-101k. If the
471 commissioner has made the determinations in subparagraphs (A) and
472 (B) of this subsection, the commissioner shall issue notice of a
473 recommended finding to the person suspected to be responsible for such
474 abuse or neglect in accordance with section 17a-101k. If the child is
475 represented by an attorney or guardian ad litem, the commissioner shall
476 notify the child's attorney or guardian ad litem in writing not less than
477 five days prior to the date of any meeting in which the department is
478 considering removing the child from the household, except, if the
479 commissioner, or the commissioner's designee, has authorized the
480 immediate removal of a child from his or her household pursuant to the
481 provisions of subsection (e) of this section, the commissioner, or the
482 commissioner's designee, shall not be required to provide advance
483 written notice of such removal to the child's attorney or guardian ad
484 litem.

485 Sec. 17. (*Effective October 1, 2026*) On and after July 1, 2027, the
486 Department of Children and Families shall conduct a public awareness
487 campaign to educate the public concerning the resources and services
488 offered by the department, including, but not limited to, the
489 department's Office of Community Relations, housing and
490 homelessness programs, the Careline established pursuant to section
491 17a-103a of the general statutes and text message programs. Such
492 campaign may include, but need not be limited to, advertisements on
493 television and social media, as defined in section 9-601 of the general
494 statutes.

495 Sec. 18. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) As used in this section,
496 "personal emergency communication device" means a global
497 positioning system-enabled, wearable device that allows an individual
498 to contact local police by pressing a button or through another
499 mechanism.

500 (b) On and after January 1, 2027, the Commissioner of Children and
501 Families shall (1) require the use of personal emergency communication
502 devices by employees of the Department of Children and Families who
503 regularly conduct visits to or evaluations of the homes of children under
504 the supervision of the commissioner, (2) provide such devices to such
505 employees, and (3) develop guidelines and a training program for the
506 use of such devices.

507 Sec. 19. (*Effective July 1, 2026*) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027,
508 the Department of Children and Families shall establish and operate an
509 urgent crisis center, as defined in section 38a-477aa of the general
510 statutes, in the city of Stamford.

511 Sec. 20. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) There is established a
512 Child Welfare Policy and Oversight Committee. The committee shall
513 evaluate and make recommendations concerning the operation, policies
514 and service outcomes of state agencies providing services relating to
515 and supporting child welfare in the state.

516 (b) The committee shall consist of the following members:

517 (1) Two members appointed by the speaker of the House of
518 Representatives, one of whom shall be a mental health professional
519 employed at an urgent crisis center, as defined in section 19a-179f of the
520 general statutes;

521 (2) Two members appointed by the president pro tempore of the
522 Senate, one of whom shall be a regional social worker supervisor
523 employed by the Department of Children and Families;

524 (3) Two members appointed by the majority leader of the House of
525 Representatives, one of whom shall be a private provider of child
526 welfare services;

527 (4) Two members appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, one
528 of whom shall be a foster parent licensed pursuant to section 17a-114 of

529 the general statutes, as amended by this act;

530 (5) Two members appointed by the minority leader of the House of
531 Representatives, one of whom shall be an expert in child welfare
532 employed by an institution of higher education in the state;

533 (6) Two members appointed by the minority leader of the Senate, one
534 of whom shall be a relative or fictive kin caregiver, as defined in section
535 17a-114 of the general statutes, as amended by this act, with whom a
536 child in the care and custody of the Commissioner of Children and
537 Families has been placed;

538 (7) The chairpersons and ranking members of the joint standing
539 committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters
540 relating to children;

541 (8) The Commissioner of Children and Families, or the
542 commissioner's designee;

543 (9) The Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee;

544 (10) The Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services, or
545 the commissioner's designee;

546 (11) The Commissioner of Developmental Services, or the
547 commissioner's designee;

548 (12) The Commissioner of Social Services, or the commissioner's
549 designee;

550 (13) The Commissioner of Housing, or the commissioner's designee;

551 (14) The Commissioner of Correction, or the commissioner's
552 designee;

553 (15) The Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, or the
554 secretary's designee;

555 (16) The Chief Court Administrator, or the Chief Court
556 Administrator's designee;

557 (17) The Probate Court Administrator, or the Probate Court
558 Administrator's designee; and

559 (18) The Child Advocate, or the Child Advocate's designee.

560 (c) Any vacancy shall be filled by the appointing authority. Members
561 of the committee shall serve without compensation.

562 (d) The chairpersons of the joint standing committee of the General
563 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children, or the
564 chairperson's designees, and the Secretary of the Office of Policy and
565 Management, or the secretary's designee, shall serve as cochairpersons
566 of the committee. Such cochairpersons shall schedule the first meeting
567 of the committee, which shall be held not later than sixty days after the
568 effective date of this section. The committee shall meet quarterly, and
569 more often upon the call of the cochairpersons. The cochairpersons may
570 designate subcommittees to carry out the functions of the committee.

571 (e) The committee shall complete its duties under this section in
572 consultation with one or more organizations that focus on relevant
573 issues regarding child welfare, including a private institution of higher
574 education in the state offering a master's degree in social work. The
575 committee may accept administrative support and technical and
576 research assistance from any such organization.

577 (f) Not later than January 1, 2028, and annually thereafter, the
578 committee shall submit a report, in accordance with the provisions of
579 section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee of
580 the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children,
581 concerning its evaluation and recommendations.

582 Sec. 21. (*Effective from passage*) Not later than January 1, 2027, the
583 Commissioner of Children and Families shall submit a report, in

584 accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes,
585 to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having
586 cognizance of matters relating to children. Such report shall include an
587 analysis of the feasibility of establishing foster care licensure
588 requirements for relative and fictive kin caregivers, as defined in section
589 17a-114 of the general statutes, as amended by this act.

590 Sec. 22. (*Effective from passage*) The Departments of Children and
591 Families and Emergency Services and Public Protection shall conduct a
592 joint study to identify ways to improve (1) communication between said
593 departments with respect to the provision of child welfare services, and
594 (2) existing policies and practices relating to the removal of children
595 from such children's homes pursuant to sections 17a-101g, as amended
596 by this act, and 46b-129 of the general statutes, as amended by this act.
597 Not later than January 1, 2027, the Departments of Children and
598 Families Emergency Services and Public Protection shall jointly submit
599 a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general
600 statutes, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly
601 having cognizance of matters relating to children. Such report shall
602 include the departments' findings and recommendations for
603 improvements.

604 Sec. 23. (*Effective from passage*) The Department of Children and
605 Families and the Office of the Child Advocate shall conduct a joint study
606 to identify ways to improve department policies and practices to ensure
607 the immediate removal from an out-of-home placement made by the
608 Commissioner of Children and Families of any child who becomes a
609 victim of physical or sexual assault occurring in or as a result of such
610 out-of-home placement. Not later than January 1, 2027, the Department
611 of Children and Families and the Office of the Child Advocate shall
612 jointly submit a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-
613 4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee of the General
614 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children. Such report
615 shall include the department's and office's findings and
616 recommendations for improvements.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	17a-114(c)
Sec. 2	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	46b-129(b)
Sec. 3	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 4	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 5	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 6	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 7	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 8	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 9	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 10	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 11	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 12	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 13	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 14	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 15	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 16	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	17a-101g(b)
Sec. 17	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 18	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 19	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 20	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 21	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 22	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 23	<i>from passage</i>	New section

Statement of Purpose:

To implement various policies concerning the provision and oversight of child welfare services in the state.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]