



General Assembly

February Session, 2026

Raised Bill No. 424

LCO No. 2739



Referred to Committee on GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT

Introduced by:
(GOS)

AN ACT CONCERNING OVERSIGHT OF PLANS PURSUANT TO SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 AND SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS IN THE STATE.

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

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) Beginning with the fiscal year
2 commencing July 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, the State Department
3 of Education shall compile and make publicly available on its Internet
4 web site data organized by district showing the number of students in a
5 public school, grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, with a plan
6 pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended
7 from time to time. The department shall track trends in such data. All
8 local and regional boards of education shall provide any information
9 necessary for the department to compile such data. The department
10 shall disaggregate and post such information in a manner that complies
11 with the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy
12 Act, 20 USC 1232g, as amended from time to time.

13 Sec. 2. (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) The Commissioner of Education shall,
14 within available appropriations, establish a working group to review

15 plans pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as
16 amended from time to time, including the use of staff and the amount
17 of staff time dedicated to the development and implementation of such
18 plans. The working group shall include, but need not be limited to,
19 representatives from the Connecticut Education Association,
20 Connecticut School Counselor Association, American Federation of
21 Teachers-Connecticut, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education,
22 Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, Connecticut
23 Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers and Connecticut
24 Association of School Psychologists.

25 (b) Not later than January 1, 2027, the Commissioner of Education
26 shall submit a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a
27 of the general statutes, to the joint standing committees of the General
28 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education and
29 government oversight. Such report shall include, but need not be
30 limited to, any best practices for plans pursuant to Section 504 of the
31 Rehabilitation Act of 1973, recommendations for statutory changes, if
32 applicable, and a summary and analysis of the impact of such plans and
33 their usage since 2020.

34 Sec. 3. Section 10-15o of the 2026 supplement to the general statutes
35 is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective*
36 *October 1, 2026*):

37 (a) There is established an Office of the Educational Ombudsperson,
38 which shall be within the Office of Governmental Accountability for
39 administrative purposes only. The Office of the Educational
40 Ombudsperson shall serve students and families of students in the
41 pursuit of preschool, elementary and secondary education, special
42 education, vocational education and adult education. The Office of the
43 Educational Ombudsperson shall be under the direction of an
44 Educational Ombudsperson who shall be appointed by the Governor
45 and be selected from among individuals with expertise and experience
46 in educational advocacy, special education and educational law.

47 (b) The Office of the Educational Ombudsperson shall:

48 (1) Receive, review and attempt to resolve any complaints from
49 students and students' families, including, but not limited to, attempts
50 to resolve such complaints in collaboration with schools and educators;

51 (2) Compile and analyze data on students and young people, through
52 available data systems, including, but not limited to, the Connecticut
53 Preschool through Twenty and Workforce Information Network,
54 established pursuant to section 10a-57g;

55 (3) Assist employees of local and regional boards of education
56 involved in planning and placement team meetings;

57 (4) Provide information to the public, agencies, legislators and others
58 regarding the issues and concerns of students and make
59 recommendations for resolving such issues and concerns;

60 (5) Analyze and monitor the development and implementation of
61 federal, state and local laws, regulations and policies relating to students
62 and recommend any changes the Educational Ombudsperson deems
63 necessary;

64 (6) Disseminate information concerning the availability of the Office
65 of the Educational Ombudsperson to assist students and families of
66 students, as well as local and regional boards of education with
67 educational resource concerns;

68 (7) On and after July 1, 2027, prioritize the office's efforts on those
69 school districts that have been identified in the study conducted
70 pursuant to section 10-76000 as disproportionately or over-identifying
71 minority students for special education and related services; [and]

72 (8) To employ legal staff and legal counsel as necessary to perform
73 the duties and responsibilities under subdivision (1) of this subsection;

74 (9) To hold hearings, subpoena witnesses and compel their

75 attendance, administer oaths, take the testimony of any person under
76 oath and require the production for examination of any books and
77 papers relating to any matter under investigation or in question;

78 (10) To require written answers to interrogatories under oath relating
79 to any complaint under investigation pursuant to this chapter alleging
80 any discriminatory practice, as described in subdivision (6) of
81 subsection (b) of section 46a-64, as amended by this act, and to adopt
82 regulations, in accordance with the provisions of chapter 54, for the
83 procedure for the issuance of interrogatories and compliance with
84 interrogatory requests;

85 (11) To utilize such voluntary and uncompensated services of private
86 individuals, agencies and organizations as may from time to time be
87 offered and needed and with the cooperation of such agencies to carry
88 out the provisions of this section; and

89 ~~[(8)]~~ (12) Take any other actions necessary to fulfill the duties of the
90 Office of the Educational Ombudsperson and the Educational
91 Ombudsperson as set forth in this subsection.

92 (c) On or before January 1, ~~[2026]~~ (2027), and annually thereafter, the
93 Educational Ombudsperson shall submit a report, in accordance with
94 the provisions of section 11-4a, to the Office of Governmental
95 Accountability and the joint standing committees of the General
96 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education and
97 children. The Educational Ombudsperson shall report on: (1) The
98 implementation of this section; (2) the overall effectiveness of the
99 Educational Ombudsperson position; ~~[and]~~ (3) the number of
100 complaints received pursuant to subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of this
101 section during the prior year, how many complaints were substantiated
102 or unsubstantiated, whether any corrective action was taken and the
103 average of time it took to process such complaints; and (4) additional
104 steps that need to be taken for the Educational Ombudsperson to be
105 more effective.

106 Sec. 4. Section 46a-64 of the 2026 supplement to the general statutes
107 is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective*
108 *October 1, 2026*):

109 (a) It shall be a discriminatory practice in violation of this section: (1)
110 To deny any person within the jurisdiction of this state full and equal
111 accommodations in any place of public accommodation, resort or
112 amusement because of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, sex,
113 gender identity or expression, marital status, age, lawful source of
114 income, intellectual disability, mental disability, physical disability,
115 including, but not limited to, blindness or deafness, status as a veteran,
116 status as a victim of domestic violence, status as a victim of sexual
117 assault or status as a victim of trafficking in persons, of the applicant,
118 subject only to the conditions and limitations established by law and
119 applicable alike to all persons; (2) to discriminate, segregate or separate
120 on account of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, gender
121 identity or expression, marital status, age, lawful source of income,
122 intellectual disability, mental disability, learning disability, physical
123 disability, including, but not limited to, blindness or deafness, status as
124 a veteran, status as a victim of domestic violence, status as a victim of
125 sexual assault or status as a victim of trafficking in persons; (3) for a
126 place of public accommodation, resort or amusement to restrict or limit
127 the right of a mother to breast-feed her child; (4) for a place of public
128 accommodation, resort or amusement to refuse entry to a person with a
129 disability who is accompanied by a service animal; or (5) to deny any
130 person with a disability or any person training an animal as a service
131 animal to assist a person with a disability, accompanied by such service
132 animal, full and equal access to any place of public accommodation,
133 resort or amusement. Any person with a disability or any person
134 training an animal as a service animal may keep such service animal at
135 all times in such place of public accommodation, resort or amusement
136 at no extra charge, provided such service animal is in the direct custody
137 and control of such person. When it is not obvious what service an
138 animal provides, staff of a place of public accommodation, resort or

139 amusement may inquire of the owner or keeper whether such animal is
140 a service animal required because of a disability and what work or task
141 the animal has been trained to perform. Nothing in this subsection shall
142 preclude a business owner's ability to recover for damage caused to a
143 person or property by a service animal. For the purposes of this
144 subsection, "disability" and "service animal" have the same meanings as
145 provided in section 22-345 and "place of public accommodation, resort
146 or amusement" has the same meaning as provided in section 46a-44.

147 (b) (1) The provisions of this section with respect to the prohibition of
148 sex discrimination shall not apply to (A) the rental of sleeping
149 accommodations provided by associations and organizations which
150 rent all such sleeping accommodations on a temporary or permanent
151 basis for the exclusive use of persons of the same sex, or (B) separate
152 bathrooms or locker rooms based on sex.

153 (2) The provisions of this section with respect to the prohibition of
154 discrimination on the basis of age shall not apply to minors or to special
155 discount or other public or private programs to assist persons sixty
156 years of age and older.

157 (3) The provisions of this section with respect to the prohibition of
158 discrimination on the basis of physical disability shall not require any
159 person to modify his property in any way or provide a higher degree of
160 care for a physically disabled person, including, but not limited to blind
161 or deaf persons, than for a person not physically disabled.

162 (4) The provisions of this section with respect to the prohibition of
163 discrimination on the basis of creed shall not apply to the practice of
164 granting preference in admission of residents into a nursing home as
165 defined in section 19a-490, if (A) the nursing home is owned, operated
166 by or affiliated with a religious organization, exempt from taxation for
167 federal income tax purposes, and (B) the class of persons granted
168 preference in admission is consistent with the religious mission of the
169 nursing home.

170 (5) The provisions of this section with respect to the prohibition of
171 discrimination on the basis of lawful source of income shall not prohibit
172 the denial of full and equal accommodations solely on the basis of
173 insufficient income.

174 (6) The provisions of this section with respect to the prohibition of
175 discrimination on the basis of intellectual disability, mental disability or
176 physical disability that concern a student with an individualized
177 education program or a plan pursuant to Section 504 of the
178 Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended from time to time, and where the
179 place of public accommodation is a public school, shall be enforced by
180 complaint made to the Office of the Educational Ombudsperson in lieu
181 of the commission.

182 (c) Any person who violates any provision of this section shall be
183 guilty of a class D misdemeanor.

184 Sec. 5. Subsection (a) of section 46a-82 of the 2026 supplement to the
185 general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu
186 thereof (*Effective October 1, 2026*):

187 (a) Any person claiming to be aggrieved by an alleged discriminatory
188 practice, except for an alleged violation of section 4a-60g or 46a-68, [or]
189 the provisions of sections 46a-68c to 46a-68f, inclusive or of 46a-64, as
190 amended by this act, that is described in subdivision (6) of subsection
191 (b) of section 46a-64, as amended by this act, may, by himself or herself
192 or by such person's attorney, file with the commission a complaint in
193 writing under oath, except that a complaint that alleges a violation of
194 section 46a-64c need not be notarized. The complaint shall state the
195 name and address of the person alleged to have committed the
196 discriminatory practice, provide a short and plain statement of the
197 allegations upon which the claim is based and contain such other
198 information as may be required by the commission. The commission
199 whenever it has reason to believe that a person who is named as party
200 to a discriminatory practice complaint has engaged or is engaged in

201 conduct that constitutes a violation of part VI, of chapter 952, may refer
202 such matter to the Office of the Chief State's Attorney and said office
203 shall conduct a further investigation as deemed necessary. After the
204 filing of a complaint, the commission shall provide the complainant
205 with a notice that: (1) Acknowledges receipt of the complaint; and (2)
206 advises of the time frames and choice of forums available under this
207 chapter.

208 Sec. 6. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Commissioner of Education
209 shall direct the Bureau of Special Education within the Department of
210 Education to implement changes to the special education data system
211 developed by the department to better adapt its use for plans pursuant
212 to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended from time
213 to time, and the differing requirements of such plans compared to
214 individualized education programs. Such changes shall ensure, at a
215 minimum, that the reporting requirements for plans pursuant to Section
216 504 of said act be limited to: (1) Student demographic information, (2)
217 the evaluation period, (3) identification of behavioral, social and
218 emotional needs of students, (4) the type of accommodation provided,
219 (5) requirements related to case management or social workers, (6) any
220 additional testing performed, (7) the identification of accessibility
221 technologies utilized, and (8) any other information required under
222 sections 10-76a to 10-76h, inclusive, of the general statutes.

223 Sec. 7. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) Not later than July 1, 2027, and
224 annually thereafter, each local and regional board of education shall
225 report to the Department of Education, for students of the district who
226 have plans pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as
227 amended from time to time: (1) The number of students with such plan
228 by grade level, (2) the types of supports given to students, and (3) the
229 number of complaints made by parents of the students with such plans.

230 Sec. 8. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) The Bureau of Special Education
231 within the Department of Education shall provide increased oversight
232 and coordination with local and regional boards of education to support

233 students with plans pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of
234 1973, as amended from time to time.

235 Sec. 9. (*Effective from passage*) (a) Not later than January 1, 2027, the
236 Bureau of Special Education within the Department of Education shall
237 perform a needs assessment of the number of social workers and school
238 counselors required to attain an ideal student to counselor and social
239 worker ratio, specified by elementary, middle and high school student
240 need, for students with individualized education programs and plans
241 pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended
242 from time to time.

243 (b) Not later than January 1, 2027, the Commissioner of Education
244 shall submit a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a
245 of the general statutes, to the joint standing committees of the General
246 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education and
247 government oversight. Such report shall include the results of the needs
248 assessment and recommendations for the ideal student to counselor and
249 social worker ratio, specified by elementary, middle and high school for
250 students with such programs or plans.

251 Sec. 10. (*Effective from passage*) The Commissioner of Social Services
252 shall identify any services that local and regional boards of education
253 provide that could be eligible for Medicaid reimbursement to leverage
254 federal funding for school or support services. Not later than December
255 31, 2026, the commissioner shall submit a report, in accordance with the
256 provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing
257 committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters
258 relating to human services, government oversight and appropriations
259 and the budgets of state agencies. Such report shall include a detailed
260 listing of any identified services that could be eligible for such
261 reimbursement.

262 Sec. 11. (*Effective from passage*) Not later than December 31, 2026, the
263 Chief Workforce Officer of the Office of Workforce Strategy shall

264 develop and report a strategic assessment plan to increase the capacity
265 of school social workers and school counselors in the state to the General
266 Assembly, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the
267 general statutes.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 3	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	10-15o
Sec. 4	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	46a-64
Sec. 5	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	46a-82(a)
Sec. 6	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 7	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 8	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 9	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 10	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 11	<i>from passage</i>	New section

Statement of Purpose:

To require various reports and assessments of the needs of students with plans pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, give the Office of the Educational Ombudsperson oversight over alleged discriminatory practices related to special education services, require the Department of Education to modify its special education data system for such plans, require the Department of Social Services to evaluate school services with potential Medicaid reimbursement and to require the Chief Workforce Officer to develop a strategic assessment plan to increase the capacity of school social workers and school counselors 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.]