



Legislative Agenda for 2026
Special Education Equity for Kids in Connecticut (SEEK)

1. Create a state office to perform the functions previously performed by the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) of the United States Department of Education. Parents of students with disabilities need a no-cost mechanism to protect the civil rights of their children. The Trump Administration's elimination of the Boston Regional Office, the firing of most of the OCR staff, and the statements about changed enforcement priorities mean that Connecticut parents have lost the protection that had in 2024. Connecticut needs to backfill for this loss. This will require both authorizing legislation and an appropriation.
2. Enhance state funding targeted to support special education. Currently, the primary funding comes through excess cost reimbursement, together with the \$30 million new SEED grant, passed last year. New funding should be targeted in three areas. First, the state should make payments to school districts with acute special education staff shortages to be used to recruit and retain staff, including special education teachers, related service personnel and paraeducators. Second, substantial funds should be provided on a grant basis to create new in-district programs to reduce the need for outplacements, building on last year's special education legislation. Third, parents of limited means need low-cost or no-cost advocacy and evaluation services. This need can be met by state grants to organizations, including the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC), various Legal Aid organizations, the Special Education Legal Fund (SELF), and the Connecticut Center for Children's Advocacy (CCA).
3. Ensure safe and appropriate education for students with disabilities. This can be done in three ways. First, Connecticut should enact legislation to mandate cameras in all self-contained classrooms, time-out rooms, and seclusion and restraint sites. Having video recordings of these sites will provide a marvelous training opportunity, as well as ensure that allegations of abuse are fully investigated. Second, Connecticut should clarify the definition of seclusion and strictly prohibit its use. Third, the state needs to act to guarantee observations by experts conducting evaluations for parents. Such observations need to be mandated both for the program in which the student is placed and any placement proposed by the district. Such observations need to be made during the school day and when students are participating in the program. Although most districts permit such observations, a few do not.
4. Modify the rate setting requirement of Section 3 of P.A. 25-67, enacted in 2025. Changes should include (a) ensuring meaningful stakeholder involvement in the design of any rate setting system; (b) clearly delineating the types of organizations to which rate setting would apply to eliminate coverage of small professional groups that contract with school districts and to

eliminate coverage of private schools that are not Approved Private Special Education Placements (APSEPs); (c) ensuring one year of a dry run of any rate setting system prior to any binding implementation.

5. Section 15 of Public Act 23-150 required the CSDE to publish on its website summaries of state special education complaints and corrective actions required by the CSDE of boards of education and other entities regarding the provision of special education and related services. The summaries are so skeletal and delayed as to provide little benefit to districts or parents. The

