

Testimony of Andrew A. Feinstein on behalf of
Special Education Equity for Kids (SEEK)
On S.B. No. 1374, An Act Concerning Public School Security Personnel Training,
Before Committee on Public Safety and Security
February 27, 2025

Senator Gaston, Chairman Boyd, Senator Cicarella, and Representative Howard,

Special Education Equity for Kids in Connecticut (SEEK) is a statewide organization of parents, providers, advocates and attorneys fighting to protect the rights and assure excellent education to students with disabilities. We are delighted to work with this committee to achieve those ends which ensuring the safety and security of Connecticut's school children and the adults who work with them.

S.B. No 1374 highlights the fact that many Connecticut schools have untrained and poorly qualified security personnel stationed in them. The very introduction of this bill shines a spotlight on the perilous state that now exists. We have untrained security guards carrying loaded weapons in schools filled with young children. We find this situation deplorable and potentially catastrophic. Our preference would be to prohibit school districts from hiring security guards altogether. The benefit they provide is minimal, while the danger they pose is immense

It also is not entirely clear whether this legislation covers uniformed school resource officers (SROs) as well as security guards. Based on the experience of our members, we can state that both SROs and security guards need substantial training to be effective and safe members of the school community.

The types of training specified in S.B. No. 1374 may be necessary for a small number of armed security guards, if we must let schools employ such poorly qualified individuals. The training that is really needed, both for SROs and all security guards, includes the following:

1. **The nature and manifestation of disability.** Many students with disabilities manifest their deficits through maladaptive behavior. All too often police and security guard interpret this behavior as threatening or criminal and respond in wildly inappropriate and inhumane ways. Training could help these officials avoid confrontation and escalation.
2. **De-escalation.** There is a large body of research-based protocols on how to defuse potentially violent or destructive situations. De-escalation must be the first approach for any SRO or security guard in dealing with a misbehaving student.
3. **Individualized Education Plans (IEP).** Each student with a disability has an IEP. That IEP describes the student's disability and contains accommodations, modifications, and services to address the student's needs. SROs and school security officers need to know that such documents exist and, under appropriate safeguards, need to have access to those IEPs for specific students who may be disruptive in the school environment.
4. **Disciplinary Responsibilities.** School staff have primary responsibility for managing the behavior of students. SROs and school security officers should not be adjuncts of the school administration in managing student conduct. Training about the need to stay out of in-school discipline matters must be clear and strong.
5. **Lock-downs.** Some students with disabilities react in strong ways to stress. Some cry or flee in reaction to the intense stress of a lock-down drill. It is frightening to think how they might react in the case of a school intruder. SROs and school security officers need to be trained and to participate with school staff in developing plans for such reactions in the case of a lock-down drill or a real lock-down.

Obviously, the Police Office Standards and Training Council and the Connecticut Police Academy are the wrong venues for this sort of training. Rather, this training needs to be provided in conjunction with the State Department of Education.

Finally, the legislation is silent on who pays for this training. We believe that it should be the responsibility of the municipality.

In sum, SEEK cannot support S.B. No. 1374 in its present form. We ask that it be overhauled to address the type of training that SROs and school resource officers really need.