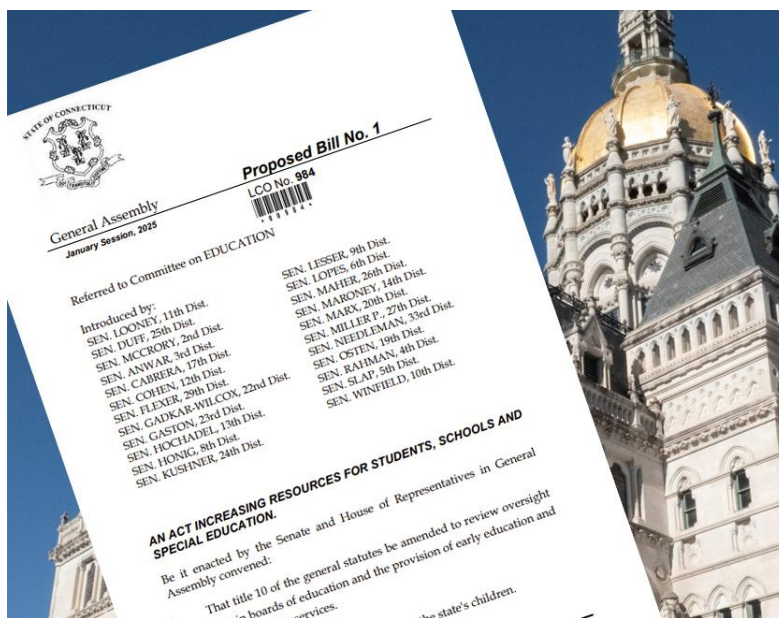


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## [CT VIEWPOINTS](#)

# New bills are a good start on reforming CT special education

*The state must address the severe shortage of certified special education personnel*

By [Jeffrey Forte](#)  
January 30, 2025

The “[Final Report of the Task Force](#) to Study Special Education Services and Funding,” issued on January 15, 2025, provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges faced by special

education in Connecticut and outlines recommendations aimed at addressing these issues.

The key aspects of the report: staffing shortages, funding inequities, current effectiveness of special education – and proposed solutions.



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The task force, composed of various stakeholders including education administrators, legal experts, and legislative members, was convened to evaluate and recommend improvements in the realm of special education services and funding.

One of the primary issues identified by the task force is a severe shortage of certified special education personnel, including teachers, paraeducators, and related service providers. This shortage has resulted in many students not receiving the mandated services specified in their Individualized Education

Programs (IEPs). Clearly, we must address this staffing crisis to improve the quality and availability of special education services.

With Connecticut's reliance on local property taxes, disparities in educational resources have resulted. As well, the state's contribution to overall education funding is below the national average, exacerbating the financial strain on districts with higher needs. As we have known empirically for some time, current funding mechanisms are insufficient to meet the demands of special education. The result: inequities that hinder the ability of students in lower-income areas to obtain needed support.

The task force report also emphasized that despite dedicated efforts, the achievement gap between students with disabilities and their peers remains substantial. There is an immediate need for systemic changes to improve outcomes for students with disabilities, ensuring they have equitable opportunities to succeed.

The task force proposed modifications to the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula to include a specific weight for special education students, ensuring more targeted funding. The report also suggests increasing state funding and revising the Excess Cost Grant system to guarantee full reimbursement for excess special education costs, thereby alleviating the financial burden on districts.

In addressing staffing shortages, as recommended, to attract individuals to be special educators and paraeducators, we must provide better pay as well as clear professional development opportunities.

As those involved in serving those with special needs have advocated for some time, there is a need for the use of innovative approaches, such as pilot programs for therapeutic services and the potential integration of generative AI to support special education. Of course, as noted by the task force, there is a significant need for comprehensive training in cultural competency and the use of updated eligibility guidelines to ensure that all students are accurately assessed and receive appropriate services.

Most involved in the field will probably find no surprised in the final report of the task force. Systemic reforms are needed. We must begin to create a far more equitable system. We must ensure that all students, regardless of their abilities or socio-economic status, have access to quality education and the support they need to thrive.

[Senate Bill 1](#) and [House Bill 5001](#), both, are a good first step toward adopting the improvements needed.

No one should be left behind because of resources, staffing and innovative programming.

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