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May 30, 2025

Senator McCorry  
Senator Looney  
Senator Gadkar-Wilcox  
Senator Duff  
Senator Maher  
Representative Ritter  
Representative Rojas  
Legislative Office Building, Room 3100  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator McCorry, Senator Looney, Senator Gadkar-Wilcox, Senator Duff, Senator Maher, Representative Ritter, Representative Rojas:

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**ConnCASE** writes to you at this late hour in our role as special education leaders and advocates to respectfully urge revisions to several sections of SB 1, as reflected in the working draft LCO 9838, before considering support for this bill. We appreciate the many days spent drafting, listening to testimony, and revising the bill.

As time is short in the remaining days of the legislative session, we will limit our comments to our priority concerns regarding SB 1/LCO 9838.

First, we continue to support several recommendations contained in the bill. Specifically, we support the provision of a grant to support in-district program development for delivery of special education services and the requirement for the Department of Education to develop a set rate schedule for special education and related services. We believe these measures will allow LEAs to establish an effective and stabilized budget process.

We also urge your support for reducing the threshold for high-cost reimbursement from 4.5 to 3.0 times the net current per-pupil expenditure for students served in-district.

As we have provided both in-person and written testimony on several occasions over the past six weeks, we continue to strongly oppose the following sections of the draft bill:

**Section 19 (c):** This section prohibits the provision of in-district special education or related services with the assistance of any third-party contractor who is not a school district employee from qualifying for the SEED grant. This exclusion fails to acknowledge the necessity of short-term contracts to engage professionals with specific

expertise in program development and staff training, and it disregards current staffing shortages. Many school districts—particularly smaller or rural ones—must contract with specialized related service providers, such as audiologists, occupational therapists, or physical therapists. Additionally, districts may need to hire expert consultants to support program and staff development in specialized areas such as inclusive practices for autistic students, evidence-based interventions for children with dyslexia, and trauma-informed practices for students with challenging behaviors or mental health needs. These contracts may be necessary to ensure staff are equipped to deliver evidence-based practices with fidelity. School districts need access to expert support to build parent trust, ensure collaborative decision-making, and support staff in creating seamless transitions for students with complex needs.

**Section 27:** The requirement to create an Office of the Ombudsman is unnecessary. The State’s existing Dispute Resolution Process, including Mediation and State Complaints, is well established in accordance with IDEA. We recommend continued support for CPAC’s role in facilitating resolutions between parents and school districts.

**Sections 28 and 20:** The requirement for each school district to hire or designate an employee to serve as an instructional support teacher imposes an unfunded mandate. Many districts already employ special education instructional coaches tasked with the duties outlined in these sections. This requirement goes beyond the obligations of IDEA. While school districts must improve teaching, engage parents, deliver professional development, and assist with classroom management, these essential responsibilities should not fall exclusively under special education.

**ConnCASE** appreciates the opportunity to provide input and strongly urges language changes to several sections of the bill. Fifty years ago, the IEP became a promise. Today, representing ConnCASE and working with all stakeholders, we recommit ourselves to that promise: ensuring that every student has a voice, every student matters, and every student belongs. We look forward to continuing to work with you to improve the delivery of special education supports and services in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Yvette Goorevitch

Executive Director

ConnCASE

Aimee Turner

President

ConnCASE

Katherine Gabrielson

Past-President

ConnCASE