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Testimony of Yvette Goorevitch

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Before the Committee on Education

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Chairwoman Leeper, Senator McCrory, Senator Berthel, Representative Zupkus, and Members of the Education Committee:

Good afternoon. I appear today as Executive Director of ConnCASE (Connecticut Council of Administrators of Special Education) to provide testimony on several of the bills before you today.

ConnCASE is a nonprofit professional organization representing more than 326 special education administrators across the State of Connecticut. Our members are dedicated to ensuring high-quality educational services and meaningful outcomes for students with disabilities. ConnCASE is the statewide division of the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE), a division of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), our national parent organization. CEC recently celebrated its 100th year of leadership and is widely recognized as the premier professional organization supporting children with exceptionalities, their families, and the professionals who serve them.

Our mission is to promote professional leadership; provide opportunities to study challenges and issues common to our members; and communicate information that directly improves services for students with disabilities in Connecticut. We have filed comprehensive written testimony outlining our positions in greater detail. Today, I will highlight several key bills we support and offer related recommendations.

S.B. 309 – An Act Concerning the Creation of a Contingency Special Education Grant

ConnCASE **supports Section 1 of S.B. 309**, which creates a contingency special education grant for local or regional boards of education when a student enrolls or becomes ineligible for Birth-to-Three services on or after March 1 and requires special education or related services, with costs exceeding two times the district’s net current expenditures.

We strongly urge the General Assembly to fully and permanently fund this contingency grant. Districts must be able to provide appropriate placements and “stay put” services for

students who move into a district late in the school year presenting with significant and unanticipated costs that were not included in fiscal planning.

Additionally, while not currently under consideration in this bill, we urge the Committee to consider:

- Reducing the Excess Cost threshold from 4.5 times to 3.5 times net current expenditures for students with significant or complex disabilities; and
- Permanently and fully funding the Excess Cost Reimbursement Grant to ensure that local education agencies (LEAs) receive the reimbursement necessary to sustain high-quality services.

H.B. 5002 An Act Concerning Education Funding, Special Education and Early Childhood Programs– Sections 9 and 10

ConnCASE supports Section 9 of H.B. 5002, which directs the Commissioner of Education to consult with:

1. ConnCASE,
2. The Connecticut Association of Private Special Education Facilities,
3. The Children’s League of Connecticut, and
4. Other relevant providers

for the purpose of developing proposed rates for related services provided pursuant to an individualized education program (IEP), including speech, behavioral, and occupational therapies.

We further urge that this consultation include recommendations for proposed rates for special education services and transportation provided by a charging entity pursuant to an IEP. Tuition rate-setting must be addressed comprehensively so that LEAs can develop responsible budgets and spending plans that ensure appropriate services for students placed in out-of-district programs, including approved private schools.

We also support Section 10 of H.B. 5002, which eliminates the provision in Public Act 25-67 that rendered district programs ineligible for SEED grants if they used contract personnel. This change appropriately recognizes the critical shortage of service providers—such as occupational therapists, BCBAs, and speech-language pathologists—which often necessitates contracting to ensure uninterrupted and appropriate service delivery.

**H.B. 5323 An Act Concerning Various Revisions to the Education Statutes –
Section 7**

ConnCASE supports Section 7 of H.B. 5323, directing the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) to establish a new school administrator mentorship pilot program.

We strongly urge inclusion of Special Education Leadership Standards within this pilot. The CASE Administrator Standards provide a framework focused on fostering inclusive and effective learning environments, collaborative engagement with stakeholders, and alignment of local programs with IDEA requirements and evidence-based practices to improve student outcomes. [https://www.casecec.org/administrator-standards#:~:text](https://www.casecec.org/administrator-standards#:~:text=)

H.B. 5325 An Act Concerning Special Education: – Sections 1 and 3

ConnCASE supports Section 1 of H.B. 5325, which requires the installation of cameras in school seclusion rooms to increase safety, transparency, and accountability for both students and staff. However, we note that this constitutes an unfunded mandate and respectfully urge the appropriation of funds to cover the one-time costs associated with purchasing and installing this equipment.

We also support Section 3 of H.B. 5325, requiring that any written contract entered into or amended between a local or regional board of education and a private provider of special education services include a provision requiring the provider to submit base tuition and service costs for each upcoming school year no later than December 31 preceding that school year. This timeline supports sound fiscal planning and promotes transparency.

We thank the Committee for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your continued leadership on issues affecting students with disabilities. ConnCASE looks forward to working collaboratively with you to strengthen special education supports and services across Connecticut.

Respectfully submitted,

Yvette Goorevitch
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ConnCASE