



## Center for Children's Advocacy

Fighting for the legal rights of Connecticut's most vulnerable children and youth

# Connecticut Alternative School Reform

**Imagine a system where thousands of low-achieving and special needs students are moved to schools that are allowed to operate with little oversight or accountability.**

Connecticut, which has some of the best schools in the nation, also has the largest achievement gap in the nation between low-income students and their counterparts. The proliferation of “alternative schools” is a **significant contributor to the state's achievement gap and contributes to depressed on-time graduation rates**, which are between 51 and 55 percent in New Haven, Hartford, and Bridgeport.

The approximately 50 alternative schools in Connecticut enroll a disproportionate share of Black and Latino students—twice the percentage of students statewide—and some have **dropout rates approaching 90 percent**. The Connecticut Department of Education does not provide any oversight to alternative schools and does not require school systems to report any data on alternative schools or programs, such as numbers of students enrolled, course offerings, or standardized test scores.

**Center for Children's Advocacy is working to reform Connecticut's alternative school system** to ensure that students receive appropriate educational services and increase the percentages of students graduating from high school on time.

The State Department of Education must **collect information from alternative schools, establish a standardized process for student transfers to alternative schools, and mandate class hours and course offerings**. The Center and its coalition partners are pursuing reforms through documentation of data and stories from alternative schools, educating and engaging parents and teachers, conducting media outreach to raise visibility, and educating and informing legislators.

Efforts to date have led to the passage of Public Act 13-122, which requires the State Department of Education to study and evaluate every alternative school and education program in the state and propose reforms. **The Center will propose legislation this year to secure appropriate changes and oversight of alternative programs to help our most vulnerable students stay in school, get a quality education, and graduate.**

### Why this work is important:

- Thousands of low-achieving and special needs students are moved to schools that are allowed to operate with little oversight or accountability.
- State data shows that 60 percent of alternative school students are Black or Latino, compared to 31 percent of students statewide.
- Some alternative schools have dropout rates approaching 90 percent.
- Connecticut has the largest achievement gap in the nation between low-income students and their more well-off counterparts.
- The proliferation of inferior alternative schools across Connecticut is a significant contributor to the state's achievement gap.

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