

# Connecticut Education Association NEWS RELEASE



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## **Governor's Veto Denies Support for Classroom Safety and Resources for Students in Need** CEA calling on legislators to override veto

With the swipe of his pen, Governor Malloy vetoed the best chance Connecticut has had to end the school-to-prison pipeline and reduce discriminatory discipline for students of color and special education students.

Public Act 18-89, which passed the legislature with overwhelming bipartisan support, would have helped ensure a safe classroom environment for all students and educators. It would have required that students who cause physical injury to others receive appropriate counseling and services rather than being ignored or disciplined in a discriminatory way, which occurs too often at present.

CEA is urging legislators, who overwhelmingly supported and passed the bill, to override the governor's veto. Without an override, Governor Malloy's veto ensures that more youth will wind up in the criminal justice system rather than having their problems and needs addressed in a proactive manner.

"It is ironic that while Governor Malloy admirably promotes counseling and mentoring for prisoners in Connecticut jails, he is denying proactive support in our schools when students cause physical injury to others. The governor is not connecting the dots. If we want fewer young people in our criminal justice system, we need to be proactive in our schools and hold administrators accountable for ensuring students receive the support they need," said CEA President Sheila Cohen.

In a recent federal survey, 43 percent of public school teachers agreed or strongly agreed that student misbehavior interfered with their teaching (National Center for Education Statistics, Indicators of School Crime and Safety, March 2018, page vii). Public Act 18-89 focuses on serious disruptions in the classroom that cause physical injury; the bill protects the safety of students and teachers, and encourages appropriate supports and interventions to help students who might otherwise wind up in the criminal justice system.

"This veto undermines safe schools and the opportunity for students to get assistance before school issues become criminal justice issues," said CEA Executive Director Donald Williams.

Last-minute opposition to PA 18-89 came from the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), which had expressed no opposition during the legislative session. Some superintendents took issue with having greater accountability for reducing violence in the schools. CAPSS made significant factual misrepresentations about the bill that could have easily been refuted during the legislative process.

“Responsible administrators should welcome the proactive and supportive approach of PA 18-89 rather than the current system of relying on expulsions and suspensions, or worse still, ignoring the needs of disruptive students,” said Cohen.

“The governor’s veto is an attempt to nullify overwhelming support in the legislature to require that administrators are accountable for classroom safety and for ensuring that students get the help they need,” said Williams.

PA 18-89 was the product of a transparent and collaborative process with input from legislators, the State’s Child Advocate, mental health advocates, the executive director of the Commission on Equity and Opportunity, and the Commissioner of Education. All input was incorporated into the bill.

“We are asking legislators to override the veto to protect every student and teacher in Connecticut’s public school classrooms and to ensure that students in need get the resources and support they need before it is too late,” said Cohen.

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The Connecticut Education Association is Connecticut’s largest teachers’ union, representing active and retired educators across the state.

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