



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
March 15, 2021

## **Center for Children's Advocacy and Connecticut Legal Services File Systemic Complaint on Behalf of Bridgeport School Children**

On March 11, 2021, the Center for Children's Advocacy and Connecticut Legal Services filed a complaint with the Connecticut State Department of Education after Bridgeport Public Schools denied special education services to Bridgeport special education students. Although federal and state law require Bridgeport Public Schools to provide special education services to all children with disabilities, Bridgeport failed to maintain adequate staffing to serve students with disabilities and neglected to inform parents and guardians when services were curtailed.

"Without sufficient staffing, Bridgeport cannot meet the students' needs," said Center for Children's Advocacy Attorney Kathryn Meyer. "Our clients are special education students, children who are the most in need of individualized attention, and who suffer most when those services are not provided. We expect Bridgeport Public Schools and the State Department of Education to strategize and find ways to fill staffing gaps so every child, including our clients, has a chance at a quality education."

Children named in the complaint are students with disabilities at Wilbur Cross School who did not receive required instruction during at least the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years, predating COVID school disruption, causing them to fall behind academically. The complaint seeks resolution for all Bridgeport special education students who have not received an appropriate education due to long-term and frequent teacher absences. Bridgeport Public Schools owes hundreds of hours of missed instruction to these students, who desperately need the appropriate education required by law.

"Bridgeport Public Schools has the obligation to provide a Free Appropriate Public Education to all special education students. A shortage of special education teachers denies families their rights right under federal and state law," said Attorney Patricia Lugo of Connecticut Legal Services. "Bridgeport students deserve better, and it must be a priority to address the shortage of special education teachers and do what is right for children with special needs."

The redacted Complaint is attached here. (will provide link)

For more information, please contact: Kathryn Scheinberg Meyer, Esq.  
Center for Children's Advocacy  
[kmeyer@cca-ct.org](mailto:kmeyer@cca-ct.org)

Patricia Lugo, Esq.  
Connecticut Legal Services  
[plugo@ctlegal.org](mailto:plugo@ctlegal.org)

Center for Children's Advocacy protects the legal rights of children who are dependent upon the judicial, child welfare, health and mental health, education, and juvenile justice systems for their care. CCA is the largest children's legal rights organization in New England, with offices in Hartford, Bridgeport, on site at Yale New Haven Hospital, Connecticut Children's Medical Center, and Yale Child Study Center. CCA's mobile office travels to meet the needs at-risk youth.

Connecticut Legal Services is Connecticut's largest nonprofit law firm whose mission is to provide access to justice and to protect the critical civil legal rights of low-income individuals and families through representation, systemic advocacy, advice collaboration and education. CLS serves low-income families in 122 of the 169 Connecticut communities across Connecticut, with full service offices in Stamford, Bridgeport, Waterbury, New Britain, Willimantic and New London, satellite offices in Meriden and Rockville, and the main Administrative office in Middletown.