

'Train wreck for public education'

Connecticut leaders warn Lamont budget leaves schools short

By **Natasha Sokoloff**
STAFF WRITER

The fight for more education funding in the state's 2026 General Assembly session has put a spotlight on the way that Connecticut funds K-12 education — and on the consequences of going another year without foundational change.

Gov. Ned Lamont's budget proposal largely maintains funding levels for K-12 education, but it is missing the substantial change to the state's main way of funding local school systems that advocates say is long overdue.

Despite celebrating Lamont's

proposals for free school breakfasts and other education initiatives, several local leaders and education advocates said the proposed fiscal year 2027 budget for public education ultimately puts further strain on Connecticut school districts and towns that could lead to staffing cuts, slashed school programming and higher property taxes.

"The governor's budget is a complete disappointment for public education," Meriden Public Schools Superintendent Mark Benigni said. "It's a budget that doesn't recognize the challenges that public schools are facing, and it just shifts the

tax burden to our property owners and the challenges to our municipalities."

Education Cost Sharing grant

The Education Cost Sharing grant — Connecticut's primary form of state funding for K-12 education — has emerged at the center of conversations around education funding this legislative session.

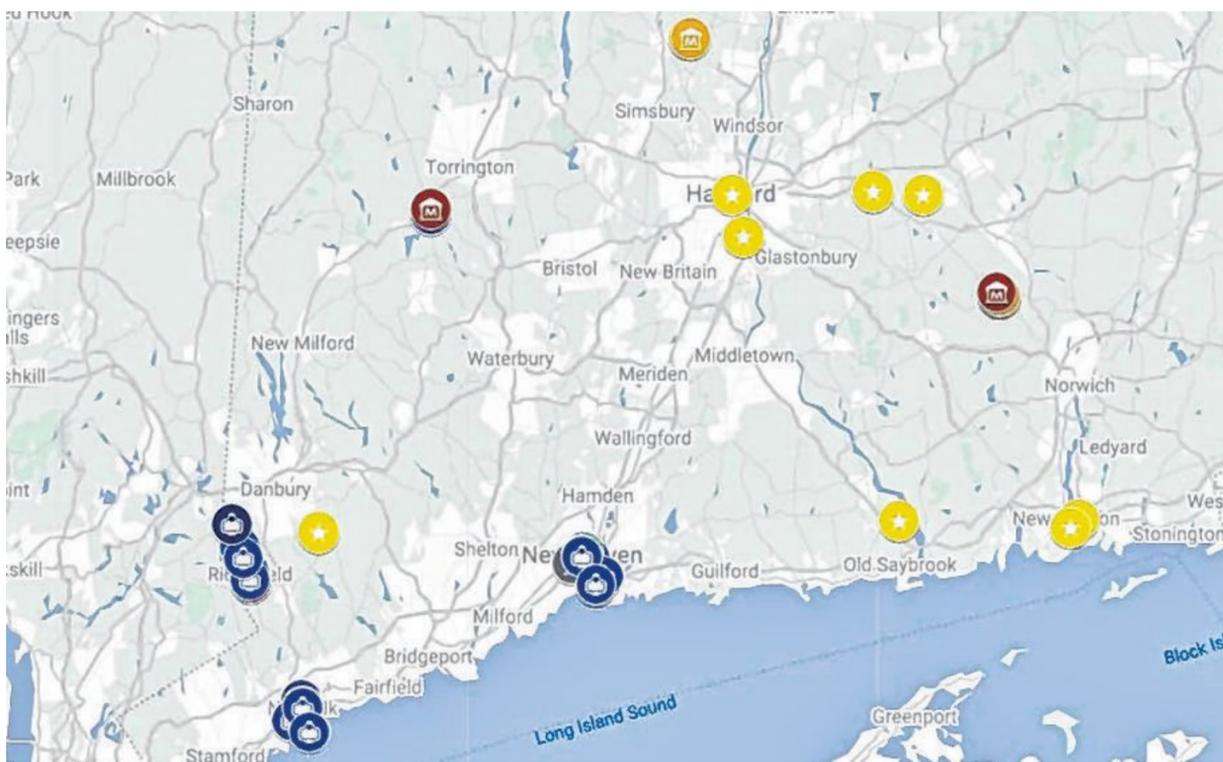
The ECS grant distributes dollars to towns based on a formula designed to provide equal educational opportunity, with a basic foundation amount, and weights that give more aid for

Wreck continues on A4



Jim Michaud/Hearst Connecticut Media

The House of Representatives after it is gavelled into session Feb. 4 at the state Capitol in Hartford on the opening day of the legislature. Education leaders and advocates are calling for the state to increase its spending on schools.



Courtesy of CTVets250

CTVets250 is creating a Revolutionary War Trail across Connecticut, marking sites of battles and other important events. The project includes development of an interactive digital map.

BATTLE OF NORWALK SITE ON DIGITAL HISTORIC TRAIL

Veterans mark Connecticut's big role in Revolutionary War

By **Jesse Leavenworth**
STAFF WRITER

Connecticut patriots helped win the Revolutionary War, fighting, spying and provisioning George Washington's army with every necessity from beef to musket balls forged from King George III's melted statue.

Now Connecticut veterans are raising money to honor the Provision State's part in the celebration of America's 250th birthday. The central project of CTVets250, now in the fundraising stage, is a Revolutionary War Trail featuring a digital, interactive map marking battles and other sites across the state



Courtesy of CTVets250

The War Office in Lebanon, where patriot Gov. Jonathan Trumbull led planning for the colony's defense and provisioning of the Continental Army. The building on the Lebanon Green is among sites featured on the CTVets250 Revolutionary War Trail.

that proved vital in the fight for liberty.

The trail will be "gamified" so that people can visit and



mark off each site for rewards, such as a discount at a nearby tavern or restaurant, project organizer Christine Pittsley said Thursday. A grand prize will be awarded to those who visit all the sites, said Pittsley, a Navy veteran and Connecticut

Trail continues on A4

Lamont seeks expansion of state's vaccine authority

By **Cris Villalonga-Vivoni**
STAFF WRITER

Gov. Ned Lamont has made it clear that one of his goals during the General Assembly's "short" session is to better protect the state from major federal changes — including when it comes to vaccines.

One of his proposals seeks to strengthen the state Department of Public Health by requiring it to rely on evidence-based science and existing public health standards to guide immunization practices, notwithstanding federal recommendations.

As immunization rates slip nationwide, to some, standardizing care is a bold step forward to protect vaccine access. In contrast, others worry the effort may stray from checks and balances by overriding legislative oversight.

Vaccines have made headlines over the past year due to an ongoing effort to align national recommendations with the vaccine skepticism long held by U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

Under Kennedy's leadership, HHS announced it would no longer recommend COVID-19 vaccines for healthy children and pregnant women, replaced the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, and abandoned the long-held position that vaccines do not cause autism.

The latest move came in early January when the ACIP announced a new federal vaccine schedule that sharply narrows the national recommendations for children. Focused more on risk-based and shared decision-making, the new recommendation reduced the number of dis-

Vaccine continues on A5

Prospect bumps Conn. tax debt to back of the line

Hospital operator owes \$127.8M to state according to latest bankruptcy court filing

By **Liese Klein**
STAFF WRITER

Add another \$127.8 million to Prospect Medical Holdings' tab in Connecticut: That's the amount of unpaid state hospital taxes the bankrupt company filed on Monday to bump to the back of the line for repayment.

In a new filing in Texas bankruptcy court on Friday afternoon, Prospect reclassified approximately \$127.8 million in hospital tax debt owed to the state of Connecticut as "general unsecured claims," or near the back of the line for repayment when the case is completed.

Gov. Ned Lamont's office,

which has said it helped broker the provider tax deal to save Waterbury Hospital from closing, had no comment on the Monday filing.

The filing ties the reclassification of the debt to the closing of UConn Health's purchase of Waterbury Hospital, a \$13 million deal that had been tied to assumption

of \$22 million of Prospect's debt and forgiveness of some portion of the state tax debt. The deal is expected to close by March 1.

State agency the Office of Health Strategy approved UConn Health's bid to buy Waterbury Hospital as part of a statewide expansion on

Debt continues on A4



Jim Shannon/Hearst Connecticut Media file photo

The front entrance to Waterbury Hospital.

