



# Government Affairs: 2025-2026 Advocacy Report

*Advancing the Profession through Legislative Action & Community Engagement*

Status: MID-SESSION UPDATE (As of February 2026)

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## 2026 Legislative Priorities: The "Top Two"

This session, ConnOTA is focused on two primary legislative levers to address workforce shortages and modernize care:

1. **Joining the OT Licensure Compact:** Removing geographic barriers to allow OT practitioners to practice across state lines, supporting both workforce mobility and patient access.
2. **Modernizing the OT Practice Act:** Bringing 1978 statutes into the 21st century to reflect contemporary, high-quality service delivery.

*Current Status: Active discussions are underway with the Public Health Committee. We have secured formal support from **Senator Henri Martin** to advance these initiatives.*

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## Mid-Session "Hot Items" & Legislative Action

- **Licensure Fee Relief:** We are actively monitoring Governor Lamont's proposal to eliminate OT and OTA licensure renewal fees. *Note: We are clarifying new information that may alter our advocacy strategies.*
- **Graduate Student Support (SB 8):** Latasha Dionne delivered critical oral testimony in February to support state-level loan programs for graduate students. This advocacy aims to combat the "chilling effect" of federal loan caps on the healthcare pipeline.
- **Workplace Safety (HB 5169):** Joyce Rioux provided testimony on an act establishing alerts for combative behavior in health exchanges to ensure the safety of practitioners in all settings.
- **Support for Vulnerable Populations (HB 5160):** ConnOTA submitted written testimony for HB 5160, an act appropriating funds to assist homeless persons, specifically highlighting occupational therapy's vital role in supporting individuals experiencing homelessness.

- **Capitol Tour (Feb 20, 2026):** Practitioners and students visited the Capitol to observe legislative activity in real-time and leave personalized "Regulate before you Regulate" notes for their legislators.
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## Protecting the Profession & Payer Advocacy

- **Licensure Fee Relief:** We are monitoring Governor Lamont's budget proposal to eliminate OT and OTA licensure renewal fees.
  - **Medicaid "Squeaky Wheel" Campaign:** We are investigating reports of restrictive Medicaid rules, including an "8-visit cap" for adult rehab and the requirement of IEPs for pediatric clinical services. We were coordinating with the CT State Department of Education to ensure medical and school services remain accessible and non-duplicative.
  - **Scope of Practice Vigilance:** ConnOTA is representing the profession in DPH scope reviews for Physical Therapy, Drama Therapy, and Art Therapy to ensure no infringement on the distinct role of occupational therapy.
  - **Interprofessional Alliances:** We joined the newly formed CT Healthcare Collective to coordinate a unified response to federal student loan eligibility changes, ensuring OT has a seat at the table with nursing, PT, and social work. We also joined the New England Collaborative to join forces with state OT associations in building capacity and shared resources.
  - **The HAVEN Program:** Following verification from the CT DPH that \$5 of every renewal fee goes to HAVEN, we are in a discovery phase to understand how this benefit supports practitioners.
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## Member & Student Engagement

- **"Motivated Morning" Legislator Breakfast:** Hosted a successful event with Rep. McCarthy-Vahey and Rep. Kennedy at Southern Connecticut State University to highlight ConnOTA's initiatives for joining the OT licensure compact & modernizing our practice act.
  - **Mental Health Advocacy:** Initiated a new student-led conversation between OTA students and the Mental Health SIS to strengthen OT's role in mental and behavioral health settings.
  - **Level 1 Fieldwork:** Continuing to mentor CT State Manchester OTA students through direct involvement in state-level policy and grassroots mobilization.
  - **Professional Advocacy Presentation:** Delivered a presentation to Sacred Heart University occupational therapy students focusing on professional advocacy and the impact of active ConnOTA engagement in shaping the future of the profession.
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## 2026 Session Timeline

- **Feb 4:** Legislative Session Convened
  - **Feb 17:** Public Hearing on Graduate Student Loans (SB 8)
  - **Feb 18:** Public Hearing on Alert system in Healthcare Information Exchange (HB 5169)
  - **Feb 20:** ConnOTA Capitol Tour
  - **March 7:** ConnOTA Spring Summit & Advocacy Chat
  - **May 6:** Legislative Session Adjourns
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## Deep Dive: Weekly Legislative Updates

Advocacy moves fast. For a granular look at our weekly progress, bill tracking lists, and specific calls to action, please visit our **2026 Advocacy Vault**.

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*Your story is our strongest evidence. Whether it's student debt, licensing costs, or reimbursement barriers—when you speak, the Capitol listens.*