

## CREATING A STUDENT LOAN BILL OF RIGHTS

Applying for college loans can be complicated and confusing. We created an Office of the Student Loan Ombudsman to assist students in navigating the loan process and educate them about the different options they have for repaying their loans. The Ombudsman will also be responsible for handling student issues and complaints about their loan servicers, and will be investigating these claims to ensure that students are being fairly treated.



*Public Act 15-162*

## PROTECTING ELDERLY CONSUMERS FROM EXPLOITATION AND ADOPTING THE CONNECTICUT UNIFORM POWER OF ATTORNEY ACT

We have taken steps to protect our seniors from abuse and from being taken advantage of financially. This law adds a number of protections, including:

- EMT's are added to the list of mandated reporters of elder abuse.
- Certain financial agents must receive training on elderly fraud, exploitation, and financial abuse.
- Someone convicted of 1st or 2nd degree larceny, or 1st degree abuse of an elderly or disabled person is prohibited from inheriting, receiving insurance benefits, or receiving certain property.

*Public Act 15-236*

## REDUCING REQUIRED TESTING IN SCHOOLS

Since the rollout of No Child Left Behind almost 15 years ago, standardized testing has come under a lot of scrutiny. One area of concern is that there are simply too many tests. For example, juniors in high school are currently required to take the SBAC exam at a time when many of them are taking the SAT or ACT college admission tests. As we work statewide and across the country to improve the use of standardized tests, the legislature took another big step forward this year by allowing schools to waive SBAC testing for any students taking these college admissions tests.

*Public Act 15-238*

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

CATHERINE F. ABERCROMBIE

PROUDLY SERVING THE 83RD HOUSE DISTRICT | BERLIN & MERIDEN



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# CAPITOL UPDATE 2015

Dear Neighbor,

I am pleased to share with you this update on the recently concluded legislative session.

Each year brings a new set of challenges, and the 2015 session was no different. Despite a serious budget deficit and the need to encourage economic growth, my colleagues and I passed a balanced budget that provides property and car tax relief for middle-class families and small businesses, consumer protections and programs that empower Connecticut's families.

We also created the framework for a once-in-a-generation investment in our transportation infrastructure, which will spur more growth in our economy and create thousands of jobs. The result of all this will improve quality of life for residents who use our roads and rail system.

In addition to delivering property and car tax relief, we passed legislation that protects seniors and consumers, and we brought transparency to the rapidly changing health care landscape. And in the aftermath of the largest data breach in state history, we set new cybersecurity standards for companies handling residents' personal data.

We stood up for military veterans, students and Connecticut workers whose jobs and livelihoods are under threat from out-of-state competition.

I hope you find this information helpful and will feel free to call or email me for any reason — legislative or otherwise. It is my pleasure and honor to serve as your state representative and I welcome the opportunity to hear from you.

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## IMPLEMENTING THE COMPREHENSIVE CHILDREN'S MENTAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PLAN

In the aftermath of the Sandy Hook tragedy, the state got to work on an implementation plan to meet the mental, emotional, and behavioral needs of our children. The newly created Children's Mental, Emotional and Behavioral Health Plan Implementation Advisory Board will bring professionals together to help our state monitor how we are taking care of our young children.

Beginning September 15, 2016, the board will submit an annual report detailing (1) the status of the execution of the implementation plan; (2) the level of collaboration among the agencies and stakeholders involved; (3) any recommendations for improvements in the execution of the implementation plan or the collaboration among such agencies and stakeholders; and (4) any information the board deems necessary and relevant to prevent or reduce the long-term negative impact of mental, emotional, or behavioral health issues on children.

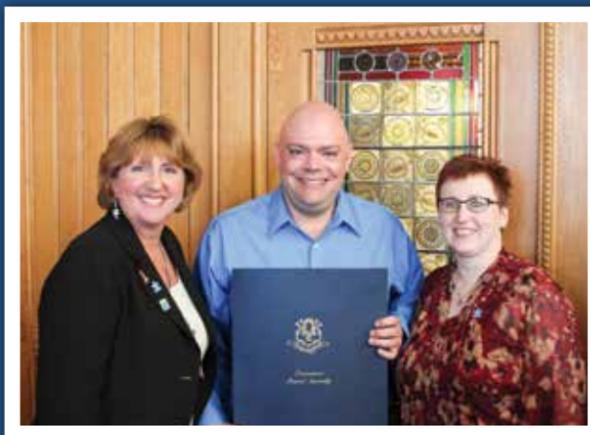
*Public Act 15-27*

## USE OF DIGITAL OPEN-SOURCE TEXTBOOKS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

This year we established an open-source textbook consortium of public institutions of higher education to help lower the cost of acquiring a college degree in Connecticut. The consortium will annually (1) assess the use of high-quality and affordable digital open-source textbooks and related materials to lower the cost of higher education to students, (2) promote the use of and access to open-source textbooks, and (3) collaborate for the purposes of developing and acquiring open-source textbooks. This consortium shall submit its first report by January 1, 2016.

*Special Act 15-18*

*Tenth Annual Autism Awareness Day at the Capitol with Chad Abdow and Vicky Koldys accepting the Autism Awareness Day Business Award for HomeGoods*



*Opening Day of the 2015 Session with Representative Brandon McGee*



*2015 House Session*



*Tenth Annual Autism Awareness Day at the Capitol*

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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## VARIABLE ELECTRIC RATES

This year Connecticut became the first state in the nation to protect residents from electricity providers offering a low introductory rate that increases rapidly afterwards. The protections enacted require competitive electricity suppliers to give their customers a 60-day notice before the end of their contracts. Suppliers cannot charge these customers a termination or early cancellation fee and must allow customers who want to switch to standard service the ability to do so within 72 hours. We also set up a process for the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) to further investigate and take measures to completely eliminate variable electric rates when a customer's contract expires.

*Public Act 15-90*

## PROVIDING PROPER FUNDING FOR STATE HATCHERIES

Increasing interest in fishing and recreation is placing pressure on the state's fish hatcheries, threatening their sustainability. These hatcheries, including the Kensington Fish Hatchery in Berlin, are used to cultivate and breed large numbers of trout and salmon used for stocking lakes and rivers to give fishermen a better chance of making a catch. In the original proposed budget, funding for these hatcheries was in jeopardy of being cut. However, we fought to preserve this critical funding of \$195,968 in FY 16 and FY 17 in the budget to ensure that these hatcheries can continue to operate. At the Kensington Fish Hatchery, in addition to breeding fish for stocking Connecticut lakes and rivers, this funding will allow for continued unique educational experiences for Connecticut students.



## PLEASE KEEP IN TOUCH

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