

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
ROBIN COMEY
PROUDLY SERVING BRANFORD

Dear Neighbor,

The COVID pandemic taught us a lot over this past year. For many, it gave an opportunity to reassess work, relationships with family and friends, and even the communities where we choose to live. Through this challenging process we have seen significant ways in the support government can provide during difficult times.

In this unprecedented period, my colleagues and I worked this past legislative session to adapt Connecticut's response by setting up new programs quickly, modernizing state government and working closely with agencies to safeguard the overall health of our residents while moving our state forward.

I am fortunate to have talked with many of you on issues important to you and your loved ones. I always welcome our discussions and am honored to represent you in Hartford. This session, I fought to ensure Branford will see an increase in funding in both Fiscal Years 2022 and 2023 through the newly passed budget. I am confident that these state investments will help our community recover and thrive as we transition out of this pandemic.

Please continue reading for more information on our legislative session highlights.

Best,


Robin Comey

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**CAPITOL
UPDATE 2021**

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IMPROVING YOUR HEALTHCARE

Our legislative priorities this year centered primarily on issues related to healthcare and the gaps that revealed themselves throughout the pandemic.

The expansion of telehealth was the big winner this year. A week doesn't go by without hearing from constituents about how accessing telehealth care has benefited them. Telehealth is definitely here to stay.

Other important laws we passed:

- Allowing nursing home residents to use virtual technology and requiring facilities to have a two-month supply of personal protective equipment
- Expanded resources for community programs and education for seniors
- Expanded newborn screening, prenatal and post-partum care
- Established an evidence-based youth suicide prevention training program so communities can better support youth in crisis

INSURANCE

As vice chair of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee, one of our top priorities is to offer insurance to as many residents and families as possible. We established the "Covered Connecticut" program to reduce the state's uninsured rate by providing premium and cost sharing subsidies that will help up to 40,000 low-income residents and families.

Other notable legislation that I worked on includes:

- Increasing affordability and accessibility of epinephrine auto injectors
- Setting minimum standards for long-term care insurance
- Extending dependent eligibility for dental and vision coverage through age 26 for the state regulated fully insured plans

BIPARTISAN, NO TAX INCREASE BUDGET

This session I worked alongside my colleagues to pass a \$46 billion dollar bipartisan budget which did not raise taxes, and focused on putting more money in the pockets of hard-working Connecticut families through increased tax credits. In this budget, I fought hard to fund our critical non-profits and health departments during these challenging times.

- Under the newly enacted budget, the Earned Income Tax Credit increased from 23% to 30.5%
- We have extended, to the 2021 and 2022 tax years, the limits on eligibility for the property tax credit against the personal income tax
- We phased out the income tax on income from IRAs, other than Roth IRAs, for taxpayers with qualifying incomes, over a four year period starting with the 2023 tax year

BUDGET SUMMARY

- ✓ BIPARTISAN
- ✓ NO TAX INCREASES
- ✓ TAX CUTS FOR THE MIDDLE CLASS
- ✓ \$3.5 BILLION RAINY DAY FUND
- ✓ FULLY FUNDS TOWNS
- ✓ RESTORES THE SOCIAL SAFETY NET

PUBLIC SAFETY

Keeping our neighborhoods safe from gun violence and property theft has bipartisan support in Hartford. This session we put community violence prevention programs on a path to sustainable funding and growth in our state – to serve more victims of gun violence and their families.

- We've expanded the definition of domestic violence to include coercive control. The law also expands the "best interest of the child" factors in family relations matters, and supports victims without the means to access legal services
- We passed stricter laws regarding enticing juveniles to commit crimes such as car break-ins
- Passed legislation that provides better training and tools for police to respond to opioid overdoses and gives improved mental health first aid training for paramedics

EDUCATION

As a member of the Committee on Children and Education Committee, I focused on passing laws that were guided by the unique needs the COVID-era demanded. In Connecticut, we're prioritizing the social-emotional needs of children. For years, I've been advocating for expanding eligibility in the Care4Kids program for parents who want to go to school to further their education or are participating in certain education programs. This year with the passing of Public Act 21-171, hundreds of families will now be able to access affordable childcare in these instances.

We successfully passed legislation that:

- Establishes social-emotional learning standards for grades 4-12
- Engages CSDE to make available model school climate policy for districts and establishes a working group to focus on updating the state school bullying statutes
- Prioritizes integrating social-emotional learning into various aspects of professional development and in-service training for many employees, including school resource officers
- Requires school districts to administer social-emotional learning assessments to students, with parents' and guardians' permission



A DEMOCRACY THAT WORKS FOR ALL OF US

This year the legislature took steps to make it easier for citizens to cast their vote. To allow early and no-excuse absentee voting, we must amend Connecticut's constitution. The legislature passed procedural votes, so voters will vote by referendum in 2022, whether to allow early voting and whether to allow no-excuse absentee balloting as we did during COVID, will be on the ballot in 2024.