

PATIENT DESIGNATED CAREGIVERS

Some patients end up returning to the hospital soon after discharge because they had not been instructed properly on their follow-up care or were unable to follow instructions. A new law, the CARE (Caregiver Advise, Record, Enable) Act, requires a hospital to document a caregiver in the patient's discharge plan, designated by the patient. They must attempt to notify the caregiver of the patient's discharge, and to instruct the caregiver on any post-discharge tasks with which the patient will need assistance.

BIG NEWS IN COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY

Student loan debt is an issue that impacts many Connecticut families. Sixty-four percent of college graduates in our state have student loan debt. This year, Connecticut became the first state in the nation to create a Student Loan Bill of Rights, which establishes an Office of the Student Loan Ombudsman. This office will regulate student loan servicers, compile data on borrower complaints, develop a financial literacy education course for students, and will help student borrowers and their parents navigate the loan process.

In addition, the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority (CHESLA) took historic steps toward increasing college affordability by announcing that it will offer its lowest fixed interest rate yet at 4.95%, down from its current rate of 6.75%. This rate is also significantly lower than the Federal PLUS loan rate of 6.84%.



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STATE REPRESENTATIVE

THERESA CONROY

PROUDLY SERVING THE 105TH HOUSE DISTRICT | DERBY, SEYMOUR, BEACON FALLS

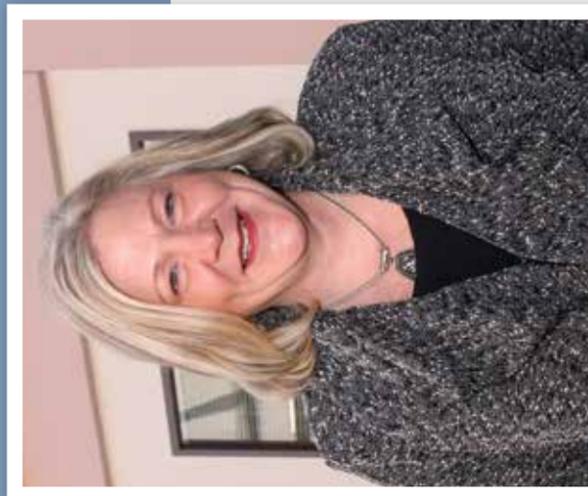


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CAPITOL UPDATE 2015

Dear Friend,

As a lifelong Valley resident, I am committed to serving my community. I feel I have a finger on the pulse on what goes on here and am in tune to the needs of my neighbors. My commitment runs deep. I feel a strong obligation to develop and bring forth legislation that will move our communities forward and meet all the needs of my constituents - your needs.

As a nurse, I gravitate toward public health policy. I am also concerned with seniors and education and have been diligently working on promoting economic development in our district.

My lines of communication are always open and I will always listen to your concerns. Please feel free to contact me at Theresa.Conroy@cga.ct.gov or 800-842-8267.

Thank you for the honor of representing you.

Theresa Conroy
State Representative

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PROTECTING ELECTRIC CONSUMERS

This year, we took steps to protect electric ratepayers. Now, when an electric provider is changing costs, the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) must hold at least two public hearings, allowing consumers to speak directly with the regulating authority. Connecticut residents are now protected from electricity providers who offer very low introductory rates that rapidly increase by these new requirements:

- Competitive electric suppliers must give customers a 60-day notice of the end of their contracts.
- Competitive electric suppliers cannot charge 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.
- A process will be established for PURA to further investigate and take measures to completely eliminate variable electric rates when a customer's contract expires.



PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

A number of important laws were passed this year to improve public health and safety. Here is a look at some of the measures that may impact you and your family.

- Regulating e-cigarettes: e-cigarette regulations are now in line with existing restrictions on smoking, banning them in state buildings, restaurants, places serving alcohol, and healthcare facilities.
- Stopping the spread of preventable diseases: Parents or guardians seeking a religious vaccine exemption for their child must now submit a notarized written statement expressing religious objection to vaccines. This statement must be submitted annually for the child to remain enrolled in school or day care.
- Preventing substance abuse and overdoses: Prescribers are now required to receive training in how to properly prescribe controlled substances and must also check a patient's record in the prescription drug monitoring program to help prevent prescription drug abuse. This law also increases access to life-saving opioid antagonists, commonly known as Narcan, which can be administered during heroin overdose.

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Info Line	2-1-1
Department of Social Services	855-626-6632
Tax Department	800-382-9463
Consumer Protection	800-842-2649
CT Fair Housing Center	888-247-4401
Statewide Legal Services of CT	800-453-3320
Center for Medicare Advocacy	800-262-4414
Medicare	800-633-4227
Office of the Healthcare Advocate	866-466-4446



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.

INCREASING SERVICES AVAILABLE TO VETERANS

Operation Academic Support for Incoming Service (OASIS) helps members of the Armed Services receive grants and scholarships to purchase necessary school supplies when enrolling in educational programs. A new law asks for a study of how our colleges could implement the best services and practices into the OASIS program.



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