

# SESSION WRAP-UP FROM **MICHELLE L. COOK** FIGHTING THROUGH COVID AND RESTARTING THE ECONOMY

Dear Neighbor,

I'm honored to serve as your state representative, and I thank you for all the sacrifices you made this year to flatten the curve. I know the past year and a half has brought each of you different challenges. Together, we are making it through.

Session was a busy one as we finalized over 350 bills and resolutions. My areas of focus included supporting our Torrington schools, small businesses, seniors, families and non-profits.

I successfully secured unprecedented amounts of relief funding for Torrington, including money and programs that will help our residents stay in their homes and apartments in the years ahead.

If you have any questions on the many accomplishments from this session, please reach out to me at 860-240-8585.

Best,



Michelle L. Cook



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END OF SESSION UPDATE FROM TORRINGTON'S  
STATE REPRESENTATIVE AND DEPUTY SPEAKER

# MICHELLE L. COOK



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STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
& DEPUTY SPEAKER  
**MICHELLE L.  
COOK**  
PROUDLY SERVING TORRINGTON

CAPITOL  
UPDATE **2021**



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## MAJOR WINS FOR OUR COMMUNITY INVESTING IN THE PEOPLE OF TORRINGTON

- Established better rates on student loans for teachers in Alliance districts, like ours.
- Created a new workforce pipeline program for individuals with disabilities
- Expanded childcare services for parents who are working on their education
- Fully funded free community college – meaning students can work on their associate degrees without having to pay tuition out of pocket
- Provided more seniors and low-income families a state tax break through the Earned Income Tax Credit
- Allowed towns to offer more seniors a property tax break
- Increased property tax breaks for volunteer firefighters and first responders
- Created a grant program to reimburse volunteer firefighters in distressed municipalities for training and certification costs, and waived the cost of background checks
- New utility protections for residential customers:
  - No more cancellation fees by electric companies
  - Consumer-friendly notifications
  - Banned unpredictable variable rates
- Leading the country with equitable broadband:
  - Assessment of state-wide access to the internet
  - Grants to cities and towns for broadband projects
  - State-level industry regulation
- Required internet providers to cover part of the state's costs

## RESTARTING TORRINGTON'S ECONOMY

- Provided millions of dollars to small businesses and start-ups over the next two years
- Created more partnerships with banks to provide low-interest loans for underserved communities, women, and minority-owned businesses
- Prioritized economic investments in companies that hire veterans, women, and people of color
- Incentivized companies to do more local job training and workforce development
- Provided relief to our local restaurants by creating a tax-free day, allowed continued alcohol to-go and delivery sales, and made outdoor dining a permanent option

**"Our budget cuts taxes for the middle and working classes, increases funding for our city and small businesses, invests in social services after years of cuts, and helps those who were hit hardest by the pandemic."**

## NO TAX INCREASES & NEW TAX RELIEF

- Maintained historic Rainy-Day Fund of \$3.5 billion
- Paid down legacy pension debt
- Supported non-profits
- Helped avoid strikes at nursing homes and group homes
- Rejected tax hikes on gasoline and insurance policies



## MORE STATE MONEY FOR TORRINGTON

These new state funds, along with federal relief dollars, should go a long way in holding the line on our property taxes.

### SUMMARY OF MAJOR STATE INVESTMENTS

	LAST YEAR	GOING FORWARD
Money for our schools	\$ 27,113,323	\$ 28,014,393
Property Tax Grants	\$ 652,917	\$ 1,156,693
Car Tax Grants	-	\$ 272,517
Stabilization Grant	\$ 72,539	\$ 72,539
Pequot Fund	\$ 196,642	\$ 196,642
Non-Education Aid	\$ 922,098	\$ 1,698,391
Improvement Projects	\$ 265,558	\$ 265,558
Municipal Projects	\$ 605,345	\$ 605,345
Road Aid	\$ 454,469	\$ 454,469

I successfully secured \$2,733,500 for Torrington's Five Points Art Center as well as increased the reimbursement rate for the new Torrington Middle/High School from 62% to 85%. In total, the new estimated grant for the school construction is now \$100,308,845 bringing the total cost down for the city around \$14,000,000.

## FIGHTING FOR GOOD HEALTHCARE

- Expanded workers' compensation benefits for PTSD to cover emergency responders, corrections workers, dispatchers, and health care providers who were on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Strengthened rights for the deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing
- Reformed nursing home staffing, policies, and supply inventories
- Limited the circumstances in which a health insurer may remove a prescription drug from the list of covered drugs, or move it to a higher cost tier
- Ensured access to virtual visits and monitoring for nursing home residents and created a statewide policy on nursing home visits
- Strengthened rights for residents of long-term care facilities
- Lowered prescription drug costs by requiring discounts go to the consumer and not the insurance company
- Continued coverage and access to telehealth
- Increased funding to local health departments

## SUPPORTING OUR SCHOOLS, TEACHERS & STUDENTS

- Ensured our kids will recover from this pandemic
  - Expanded youth suicide prevention training
  - Created more outpatient services for kids
  - Continued virtual parent-teacher conferences
  - Addressed absenteeism in virtual learning
  - Ended shaming when families fall behind in paying for their children's school lunches
- Passed legislation that created the Office of Dyslexia and Reading Disabilities
- Banned surprise graduation fees at CT colleges and universities
- Allowed children, stepchildren and other dependent children to retain dental and vision insurance coverage under their parents' insurance policies until the age of 26
- Established a student loan forgiveness program for early childhood educators, a personal income tax credit for certain employees of child care service providers, and expanded eligibility in the Care4Kids program for certain parents and caretakers

## HELPING OUR VETERANS

- Established a tourism trail that showcases our veteran and military destinations
- Ensured funeral benefits for low-income veterans
- Established the National Purple Star School Program to assist military families moving to the state with school registration, planning, counseling and other support services
- Directed state colleges to update the credits they can award based on military training

