

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
MIKE D'AGOSTINO

Dear Neighbor,

Earlier in the session, I was proud to spearhead the passage of a \$1.5 billion state employee concessions agreement that helped close the state's multi-billion dollar budget deficit, while continuing to protect collective bargaining in Connecticut. To close the remaining budget deficit, I pushed for legislation to implement tolls to capture revenue from out-of-state drivers, increase taxation on the wealthy, close special interest tax breaks given to hedge funds, and reduce municipal aid given to wealthy towns with mill rates that are less than half that of Hamden's. But there was not enough support in the Legislature to pass any of these progressive policies.

The bipartisan budget that passed Oct. 26 - which I voted for - largely avoided an \$8.5 million reduction in state aid to Hamden. It also included other measures that I supported such as a new education aid formula, under which Hamden will finally see an increase in school funding next year and in the future.

Other highlights include:

- More than \$31 million in bonding for renovation to our elementary schools, including West Woods and Shepherd Glen.
- Fully funding day and employment services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, as well as protecting funding for mental health and substance abuse treatment programs.
- The budget lowers taxes for retirees by eliminating the tax on social security income and pension income for single filers with an adjusted gross income below \$75,000 and joint filers below \$100,000.

This budget, however, is far from perfect and it contained none of the new revenue sources that I fought for this session. If that frustrates you, you are not alone. To help ensure that we pass budgets that protect Hamden and our working families, it is vital for all residents to become involved and help elect candidates on every level who will fight for what they believe.

Sincerely,



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
MIKE D'AGOSTINO

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MORE OVERSIGHT ON TREE TRIMMING

In 2013, I wrote and passed a law protecting the state's trees from unnecessary pruning and removal by utility companies. Under this legislation, a process for preserving our neighborhood aesthetics, landscape and environmental quality was created. This law also allows residents to object to and prevent utility tree trimming when it is being done unnecessarily. I have worked to strengthen this law every year - including this year - to give residents more notice for when tree trimming occurs and ensuring that utility companies are required to clean up debris after tree pruning and removal. *(Public Act 17-117)*

HELPING PREGNANT WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

This session, we strengthened protections for pregnant and nursing women under the state's anti-discrimination laws to prevent an employer from discriminating against pregnant women. While the federal Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 and state law prohibit employees, employment agencies and labor unions from discriminating on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth or related health conditions, this bill would ensure reasonable accommodations are provided to pregnant employees.

Employers must also now participate in education about their responsibilities in these matters, while also notifying their employees about these protections, which are critical to a family's financial security and are good for the growth and stability of our economy. Women's full participation in the workforce is essential to a successful economy. Through this legislation, women no longer have to choose between pursuing a career and raising a family. *(Public Act 17-118)*

GOOD NEWS FOR HAMDEN'S STEM ACADEMY

Hamden is set to build a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Academy at its high school after the State Bond Commission approved \$500,000 in funding.

While the high school has begun to alter its curriculum to offer courses in the health, engineering and computer science fields, the school's current infrastructure limits its ability to provide students with extensive, career-focused STEM learning opportunities.

These state funds will be used to construct two STEM Academy divisions at Hamden High School – Health Sciences and High Tech.

The money will be used for the renovation of existing classrooms with electrical and telecommunications updates, building modifications, and the purchase of specialized lab tables, equipment and computers.

Not only will these funds help enrich our children's education, but it will help create technologically-advanced classrooms that will help us better prepare our students for an entry-level career in hard-to-fill health care and high-tech positions following their high school graduation.



Hamden High School



COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

I had the privilege this year of leading House passage of the State Employee Bargaining Agent Coalition (SEBAC) agreement. This historic deal, which puts Connecticut on the path to financial stability, passed in the House in a 78-72 vote. The agreement saves taxpayers \$1.5 billion over the next biennium and \$24 billion over the next 20 years and establishes a structure to pay off the state's long-term retirement and health care liabilities.

Under this agreement, thousands of middle-class state workers agreed to zero wage increases for three years, higher health co-pays and premiums, increased pension contributions and the creation of a new hybrid retirement plan similar to the defined contribution plans seen in the private sector.

During the more than six hours of debate, Republicans proposed the idea of eliminating collective bargaining in Connecticut so that these conditions could be imposed unilaterally on state workers. Doing so would be legally and morally wrong. Making any deep structural changes to state employees' pensions and health care while the current collective bargaining agreement is in effect would plunge the state into costly litigation.

Instead of going down that path, this collectively bargained agreement shrinks Connecticut's budget deficit, makes deep structural changes to state workers' pensions and benefits – all while reaffirming the role our state workforce and collective bargaining has played in building, maintaining and preserving the middle class in this state.