

2018 CAPITOL UPDATE FROM STATE REPRESENTATIVE SUSAN JOHNSON

Dear Neighbor,

It is an honor to serve you in the legislature. This year's legislative session has concluded and for the second year in a row we passed a bipartisan budget agreement.

The budget protects towns, restores cuts to the Medicare Savings and Renters Rebate Programs that help elderly and disabled individuals, and funds transportation infrastructure – all without raising taxes.

The budget increases Windham's state education aid by \$585,099. I also supported policies that assist small businesses, enhance workforce development and help reduce prescription drug costs.

I hope you find the enclosed information helpful. Please don't hesitate to reach out to my office if I can be of service to you or your family.

Sincerely,



STATE REPRESENTATIVE **SUSAN JOHNSON** PROUDLY SERVING WINDHAM



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PROTECTING HEALTHCARE

The Affordable Care Act contains ten essential health benefits that we codified into Connecticut State Statutes this session. Despite what happens at the federal government, the following benefits are safe guarded and Connecticut insurance policies must cover these basic services:

✓ Ambulatory patient services	✓ Prescription drugs
✓ Emergency services	✓ Laboratory services
✓ Hospitalization	✓ Pediatric services
✓ Maternity and newborn care	✓ Preventative and wellness services
✓ Mental health and substance use disorder services	✓ Rehabilitative services

MEDICARE SAVINGS PROGRAM RESTORED

The bipartisan budget agreement restored funding to the Medicare Savings Program. MSP helps low income elderly individuals and the disabled pay for the cost of medicine and healthcare premiums. The 2017 budget package called for a decrease in eligibility that was scheduled to take effect on July 1, 2018. The 2018 agreement maintains the current income eligibility limits as detailed in the chart below:

Table 1: Current MSP Income Limits

MSP Tier	Individual Income Limit (% FPL)	Individual Annual Income Limit
QMB	Less than 211%	\$25,615
SLMB	211% to 231%	\$28,043
QI	231% to 246%	\$29,864

REDUCING PRESCRIPTION COSTS

Recognizing that prescription drug prices are the number one driver of rising healthcare costs, we passed legislation to hold pharmaceutical companies accountable by increasing transparency and requiring them to explain large price increases for drugs that have a substantial cost to the state. Additionally, insurance companies must now submit information about which drugs are most frequently prescribed and which are provided at the greatest cost. By collecting more data and holding drug companies accountable, we can get closer to lowering drug costs for Connecticut residents.

STUDYING TRANSPORTATION

My office heard the concerns and issues raised by senior citizens, veterans and people with disabilities regarding their transportation needs. We created a task force that study these transportation issues and make recommendations for future legislation and programs.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE SUSAN JOHNSON

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP: APPROPRIATIONS | EDUCATION | INSURANCE & REAL ESTATE



A BIPARTISAN BUDGET FOR CONNECTICUT

I was proud to support a bipartisan budget adjustment as it meant increased state aid to Windham. Our community will receive \$33,604,767 this fiscal year instead of the \$33,486,313 that we received last year. Windham schools' aid increased from \$26,404,706 to \$26,989,805. The budget agreement also allowed for the:

- Allocation of \$537,964 to the Willimantic Taxing District for a car tax grant to replace funding that is lost under the car tax cap
- Shifting of responsibility for the Renter's Rebate Program from municipalities back to the state - where responsibility was placed initially
- Restoration of funding for the Medicare Savings Program, \$10 million for the Energy Efficiency Fund, juvenile justice programs, and developmental services
- No income, sales, or other state tax increases
- Maintenance of the "Rainy Day" fund reserves at the highest level in over a decade
- Funding for towns and non-profits that are working with displaced students from Hurricane Maria
- Avoidance of fare hikes and service cuts to public transit by modifying appropriations to the Special Transportation Fund
- Additional \$2 million in funding for veterans' healthcare

SUPPORTING OUR VETERANS

Veterans who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, a traumatic brain injury, or are the victims of military sexual trauma deserve support as they recover and reintegrate into civilian life. However, these conditions pose unique challenges and some veterans receive a less than honorable discharge from the military, which makes them ineligible for services. We successfully passed legislation this session to allow these veterans access to the state services they need and earned.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

This session, we codified into law the good work that the State Department of Education (SDE) and the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force have done over the last few years. We also implemented new policies aimed at further promoting a thriving and diverse teacher workforce in our state. SDE will work to develop new alternative routes to certification for paraprofessionals, charter school teachers and veterans. Additionally, SDE will work with vendors to allow certain teachers to retake their licensure test for free if they do not successfully pass the first time.

We also passed the "Dreamers" bill into law, giving undocumented college students access to financial aid at state colleges and universities. This is only fair, since financial aid is funded with a portion of tuition and fees paid by students – undocumented or not. I was proud to support this legislation.