

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
CRISTIN
McCARTHY VAHEY

Dear Fairfielders,

It is a tremendous privilege to represent you at the State Capitol. This was a year of many difficult choices for the General Assembly, as we worked to close a projected \$3.5 billion deficit over the next biennium.

Recently I joined my colleagues in the House and Senate in voting for a bipartisan budget agreement. Ending the impasse was an important step for Fairfield and our state.

The adopted budget prevents the devastating cuts in the governor's executive order, which would have eliminated Fairfield's education cost sharing funds. I have been a strong advocate for a fair and predictable education funding system, and this budget takes steps to improve that system – although more work is still needed.

This update discusses several elements of the bipartisan budget, along with additional legislation I championed. I am committed to working with my colleagues to improve the budgeting system.

This year I have also focused on ensuring retirement security, closing the gender wage gap, combatting the opioid epidemic, increasing access to psychiatric services, and protecting employees in the workplace.

I am committed to partnering with legislators, constituents, and community leaders to make Connecticut an even better place to live, work, and raise a family. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me as we prepare for the 2018 legislative session - my office is always open to you.

Best Wishes,

Cristin McCarthy Vahey

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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CAPITOL UPDATE 2017



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GROWING OUR ECONOMY

SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES

The budget maintains funding for important programs that assist small businesses, such as the Bioscience Innovation Fund, Angel Investor Tax Credits, and the Women’s Business Development Council. We expanded the Angel Investor Tax Credit program to help more entrepreneurs by allowing investments in additional types of industries to qualify for the credit.

The budget also supports CT’s Manufacturing Innovation Fund, which provides business development and technical support to manufacturers.



Touring Fairfield’s Bigelow Tea

HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION



Meeting with students from St. Thomas Aquinas School in the House chamber

Investments in education are critical to creating informed citizens and providing the skills workers need to succeed in the modern workforce. Beginning in 2019 the education aid formula will better weigh factors that go into student success, but more work is needed.

We improved our workforce development efforts by streamlining the technical high school system and encouraging greater collaboration between businesses and higher education. We are investing in programs that provide individuals the skills Connecticut businesses are looking for – helping workers get ahead and local businesses thrive.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

We passed a resolution placing a question on the 2018 ballot on creating a “transportation lockbox.” If approved by voters, the lockbox would prohibit the state from using transportation funding for any other purposes. I am dedicated to ensuring that Connecticut’s infrastructure meets the needs of commuters and businesses as we work to grow our economy.

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IMPROVING FISCAL STABILITY FULFILLING PENSION OBLIGATIONS

Pension funding obligations remain front and center in our budget conversations. The bipartisan budget results in full funding of our pension obligations through increases in the teachers’ and state employees’ contribution with a decrease in the amount funded by the state for teachers’ pensions. Decades of mismanagement of our pension obligations is one of the primary reasons we are facing such large liabilities in the present day. It’s critical that we find sustainable strategies for meeting our responsibilities.

This fall I attended a three day “Pension Academy” hosted by the Council of State Governments to explore potential solutions in depth, and I will continue to work with all parties toward long-term policy changes.

BONDING & SPENDING CAPS

The bipartisan budget included caps on both state bonding and spending. The bonding cap is expected to save nearly \$30 million in debt service payments in the next fiscal year.

The new spending cap will require that funding for pensions, distressed municipalities, and moneys used to receive matching federal grants will eventually be included under the cap.



Attending the Governor’s Economic Development Forum with local leaders

HEALTH OF OUR HOSPITALS

Hospitals in our region are not only central to our health care, but are key employers and economic drivers. Democratic leaders developed a plan together with hospital administrators that allows our hospitals to continue providing high quality care to patients, particularly underserved populations. The bipartisan budget implements a proposal that will bring new revenue to the state, while also increasing state payments to hospitals over 2017 levels, due to enhanced federal reimbursements.

HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

COMBATTING THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

As a legislator and community prevention leader, I continue to work collaboratively to combat the opioid epidemic and promote prevention efforts. I co-sponsored legislation passed this year that places reasonable limits on opioid prescriptions for minors, requires insurers to cover medically necessary recovery services, requires medical providers to discuss opioid risks with patients, and facilitates the destruction of unused medications.



At the CT statewide prevention conference with Fairfield Cares members

ACCESS TO PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES



Cristin was named a Legislative Champion for Mental Health by the Southwest Regional Mental Health Board.

Approximately 1 in 5 people in the U.S. experience mental illness in a given year. In Connecticut, only about half of those in need of mental health services receive them. Mental health services are critical for people dealing with these issues, but workforce shortages in psychiatry in Connecticut and across the country have made finding the right care even more difficult. I introduced legislation passed this session creating a task force to address the shortage of health care professionals providing psychiatric services and ensure individuals and families receive the care they need.

PROTECTIONS FOR PREGNANT WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Women shouldn’t have to choose between having a career and starting a family. I co-sponsored legislation that strengthens current protections for pregnant and nursing women under the state’s anti-discrimination law and requires employers to make reasonable accommodations for pregnant workers.