



Dear Friends,

The state of Connecticut faced many challenges in 2013 and we successfully met those challenges and moved the state in a positive direction. In response to the tragedy that took place in Sandy Hook this past December, the legislature listened to Connecticut residents and worked in a bipartisan manner to improve school security, firearm safety and access to mental health services in an effort to prevent such a catastrophic event from happening again. We also balanced our budget while maintaining assistance to cities and towns with no new taxes. This session I am proud to say that we successfully:

- Gave seniors a choice in their long term care through "Aging in Place"
- Assisted struggling homeowners by improving the foreclosure mediation process
- Increased funding for affordable housing
- Took the first step in GMO labeling
- Took steps to reduce the incidents of racial profiling
- Increased the minimum wage

I look forward to answering your questions about any issues facing our state or you personally. Please feel free to contact me at my Capitol office at 860-240-8585 or if you would like more information about other legislation not reflected in the this newsletter, please go to my website at [www.housedems.ct.gov/McGee](http://www.housedems.ct.gov/McGee).

Sincerely



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STATE REPRESENTATIVE

**Brandon L. McGee Jr.**

PROUDLY SERVING HARTFORD & WINDSOR | 5TH DISTRICT

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# CAPITOL UPDATE 2013

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**HOMEOWNER PROTECTION RIGHTS**

The ability to own a home is part of the American dream, but financial hardship can threaten that dream for families, sending them to the brink of foreclosure. We worked hard this past session to protect homeowners and facilitate a fair and speedy foreclosure mediation process by passing An Act Concerning Homeowner Protection Rights. A more streamlined process helps both the banks and the homeowners come to a quicker solution to keep homeowners in their homes, while fulfilling their obligation to the bank or lender. The provisions include: At least three mediation sessions before referring a case to a judge, a requirement that banks mediate in good faith, which helps remove blighted properties from neighborhoods by shortening the foreclosure timelines for abandoned

property, and requirements that the bank treat a homeowner's most recently submitted financial package as current, which will end the burden of constant requests for new documents. Finally, the law provides the Department of Banking with the authority to create regulations that require banks to disclose various foreclosure related information. **(HB 6355/PA 13-136)**

**STATE-FUNDED CHILD CARE**

This legislation ensures that child-care facilities that received loans from the State of Connecticut for construction costs continue to receive state financial assistance, including funds for the School Readiness Program, for the life of the loan. Ending this aid while the loan is still outstanding could result in the organization defaulting on the loan and a loss of money to the state. **(HB 6506/SA 13-16)**



**CREATING A BETTER WORKING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STATE AGENCIES AND SMALL BUSINESSES**

New legislation allows the commissioner of the Department of Revenue Services to waive tax penalties up to \$1,000 without requiring additional approval from the Penalty Review Committee. This change streamlines the process for small businesses in Connecticut and eliminates additional review of waivers up to \$1,000. The law also prevents the issuance or renewal of certain permits and licenses by the Department of Revenue Services to anyone who owes state taxes for which all administrative and judicial remedies have expired or been exhausted. **(HB 6567/PA 13-150)**

**INCREASING THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE**

Connecticut residents who earn minimum wage have gone three years without seeing an increase in their salaries. While the economy recovers, workers who earn minimum wage are faced with price increases and are forced to make decisions about what is a priority to their families. This law allows these families to earn approximately \$900 more a year, if they work full-time, which is essential to those individuals on that end of the economic spectrum. These wages are spent locally, which in turn help large and small businesses in the state. By increasing the minimum wage the legislature is helping low wage earners and boosting local economies. **(SB 387/PA 13-117)**

**AN ADEQUATE PROVIDER NETWORK TO ENSURE POSITIVE HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR LOW INCOME RESIDENTS**

Under the Affordable Care Act, individuals making up to \$15,300 per year are eligible for Medicaid coverage beginning January 1, 2014. This Medicaid expansion means the strength of Connecticut's healthcare provider network is more important than ever. This law tasks the legislature's Council on Medical Assistance Program Oversight with evaluating the provider network and making recommendations for reducing barriers to provider participation, improving care coordination, eliminating racial and ethnic disparities and lowering costs. **(SB 1026/SA 13-7)**



**TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

Teaching our youth is a tremendous and increasingly complex responsibility. While our current teacher certification process is quite rigorous, it does not specifically include a comprehensive training regarding how children learn and develop socially and emotionally. This session we passed a law that requires the State Board of Education to include in their current course of study instruction how to conduct a comprehensive, coordinated social and emotional assessment of, and early intervention for, children who appear to have social or emotional problems. This better prepares future teachers to handle all aspects of a child's learning and development. Training must also include educating teachers about the availability of treatment services for such children, referrals for assessment, intervention or treatment services. This training will be embedded in the existing coursework for prospective teachers.

**(HB 6292/PA 13-133)**

