



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Thank you for your support. It has been an honor to represent you in the General Assembly for another term. There have been many intensely debated issues this legislative session and it has been a privilege to represent the people of Stamford in each of those discussions.

Connecticut's economy continues to recover and looking back at the 2015 legislative session I am proud of the steps the legislature took to grow our state's economy. We supported the successful Small Business Express Program and made historic investments in transforming our state's transportation system.

We have continued to support and improve our education system by providing additional aid to J.M. Wright Technical High School and students with learning disabilities like dyslexia. We also took significant steps to lower the cost of higher education by becoming the first state in the country to establish a Student Loan Bill of Rights.

I hope you find this information to be of use and please do not hesitate to call my office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

STATE REPRESENTATIVE & DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE
PATRICIA BILLIE MILLER

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE & DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

**PATRICIA BILLIE
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CAPITOL UPDATE 2015



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J. M. WRIGHT TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL

I am happy we were able to bring home more state funding for J.M. Wright Technical High School to support increasing enrollment at the school. Enrollment is expected to grow by approximately 150 new students as the freshman class transitions to sophomore year and a new freshman class is accepted.

The school will receive an additional \$1.4 million in FY16, and an additional \$3.5 million in FY17.

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CONSUMER PROTECTION

BETTER LABELING ON PRESCRIPTION BOTTLES

Patients will better understand their prescriptions now that pharmacists are required to include certain information with generic drugs such as the brand name, the manufacturer’s name, and the website and telephone number for the U.S. FDA’s drug safety and reporting program (MedWatch).

VARIABLE ELECTRIC RATES

Connecticut became the first state in the nation to protect residents from electricity providers who offer a low introductory rate that increases rapidly. The protections require competitive electric suppliers to give their customers a 60-day notice before the end of their contracts. Suppliers cannot charge customers a termination or early cancellation fee and must allow customers to switch providers within 72 hours.

PROHIBITING MANDATORY REGISTRATION FOR CERTAIN CONSUMER WARRANTY COVERAGE

A manufacturer or retailer is now prevented from requiring you to register to warranty the product, provided there is proof of purchase. They are allowed to offer extended warranties in exchange for returning the registration card.

SENIORS

PATIENT-DESIGNATED CAREGIVERS

The CARE (Caregiver Advise, Record, Enable) Act requires that a hospital document a caregiver in the patient’s discharge plan, designated by the patient. They must attempt to notify the caregiver and to instruct the caregiver on post-discharge tasks.

HOSPITAL TRAINING AND PROCEDURES FOR PATIENTS WITH SUSPECTED DEMENTIA

Connecticut has seen an increase in the number of individuals being diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. One of the recommendations from the Alzheimer’s Task Force was to provide training for those hospital staff members who provide direct care to patients on how to identify the symptoms of dementia. This will help these staff members know what to look for and how to better treat patients with dementia.

EDUCATION

STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA

We made several changes to state law regarding dyslexia. The State Department of Education is now required to designate a point person to help parents and local Boards of Education with identifying students with dyslexia and appropriate interventions. In addition, teacher preparation programs must include instruction in the detection, recognition of and intervention for students with dyslexia.

LONG ISLAND SOUND BLUE PLAN & RESOURCE AND USE INVENTORY

The Long Island Sound remains one of our most precious state resources. To protect the Sound, the “Blue Plan” will inventory the resources, uses and conservation areas of our portion of Long Island Sound. With this plan in place, we will be able to more clearly and effectively manage our offshore waters through data-driven processes. Plans similar to this have been instituted by a number of our neighboring coastal states with great success.

REDUCING REQUIRED TESTING IN SCHOOLS

Standardized testing has come under a lot of scrutiny. One concern is that there are simply too many tests. Juniors in high school are currently required to take the SBAC exam at a time when many of them are taking the SAT or ACT college admission tests. New legislation allows schools to waive SBAC testing for any student taking these college admissions tests.

COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY

Connecticut became the first state to create a Student Loan Bill of Rights, which establishes an Office of the Student Loan Ombudsman. This office will regulate student loan servicers, compile data on complaints, develop a financial literacy course for students, and will help students navigate the loan process.

The Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority (CHESLA) took historic steps toward increasing college affordability. It will offer its lowest fixed interest rate yet at 4.95%, down from its current rate of 6.75%.

HELPING SMALL BUSINESSES

This year we allocated more funds for the highly successful Small Business Express Program. We are also requiring the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) to dedicate funds to develop a program for construction projects for minority business enterprises. These moves will create jobs and better economic opportunities for Connecticut families.

PLEASE KEEP IN TOUCH

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