

Dear Neighbor,

On March 8th, Connecticut had its first confirmed case of coronavirus.

On March 9th, the Governor declared a state of Public Health and Civil Preparedness Emergency. And our lives have been radically changed ever since.

However, my commitment to you, your family and our community has not changed. We will get through this period, and I know our state will be stronger on the other side. I believe the pandemic has exposed some fundamental flaws in our system -- issues of labor inequity, breakdowns in logistics, the need to shore up our manufacturing, and the importance of upgrading some antiquated software infrastructure, such as that used by the Dept. of Labor. While all of us long for the days before social distancing and masks, I don't believe returning to "normal" is good enough. We need an entirely new normal, and our goal should be to rebuild our state, and our nation, in ways that enhance the safety, rights and quality of life for everyone.

I'm constantly impressed by how well run our towns are, and I sincerely thank my colleagues on the municipal level for their expertise and partnership -- especially in handling all the various aspects of this public health crisis.

If you have any questions or concerns, or if I can be helpful to you in working with any state agency or understanding how any of our state laws or regulations can affect your work, our schools, or your opportunities, please call or email me anytime.

Best,

Christine Palm



STATE REPRESENTATIVE | 36TH DISTRICT

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CORONAVIRUS RESOURCES

For the most up-to-date information please visit portal.ct.gov/coronavirus

The CDC, and Governor Lamont, are continuing to require that individuals wear masks in public when unable to “social distance” more than 6 feet away from others.

If you are out of work, you have the right to file for unemployment insurance. Visit www.FileCTUI.com to file your claim or call: 860-263-6975, 203-455-2653, 860-263-6974 or 203-455-2650.

If you are a business owner, the Department of Economic and Community Development is developing and updating guidelines on safe ways to operate your business: business.ct.gov/Recovery. They have also opened a small business hotline: 860-500-2333.

If you notice a business not operating in a safe manner, call 2-1-1.

In addition, we have worked with the federal delegation and the Governor’s office to develop and fund a number of smaller assistance programs ranging from funding for artists and farmers, to helping our schools deal with unexpected expenditures.

I know that working with state agencies and our partners during this time can be complicated. Phone lines are crowded, and applications may be confusing. My office is here to help. Call or email me anytime, and I promise to work my hardest on your behalf.



Young environmental activists testifying at the State Capitol on my climate change teaching bill.

ADVOCATING FOR YOU DURING THIS TIME

This has been a remarkably challenging time for all of us. Please do not assume that because our 2020 Legislative Session was suspended that we have been idle! On the contrary, with the help of my Outreach Coordinator Tamara Morris, I’ve been in touch with more of you than ever before. And while these are not ideal circumstances under which to meet, the work has been extremely gratifying. We’ve worked with several dozen citizens to fix issues with your unemployment compensation applications, and have helped numerous others, ranging from getting a local business added to the “Essential Business” list to helping a constituent deal with suspected financial fraud.

I am proud to say that because of our advocacy, we have expanded tele-medicine, expanded affordable childcare options for front-line workers, and delayed due dates for state income taxes and municipal property taxes.

THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION THAT WASN’T

When we began this year’s legislative session on February 5th, I expected to be working on the issues that I promised to advance, including protecting the environment, reducing the cost of health insurance, making it easier to exercise your right to vote, and bringing back more support for our schools. As a member of the Environment, Judiciary and Regulations Review Committees, I was deeply involved in advancing bills to require the teaching of climate change in our public schools, protect our coastline, ensure women’s rights, and enhance police accountability -- an issue that has been brought to light by the Black Lives Matter movement. We are scheduled to address this issue in a special session later this summer.

One of the few votes we took this year in the House of Representatives was for the bond act. I am proud to say that this legislation contained authorizations for state aid for our towns. In addition, included in the 2020-2021 state budget was \$407,170 for safety improvements and renovation to the Chester/Hadlyme Ferry.

LOCIP (LOCAL CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS)	FY 20 & 21 \$ 173,674
TOWN AID ROAD	\$ 846,706
GRANTS FOR MUNICIPAL PROJECTS	\$ 271,501

In addition, the bill contained funds for workforce development, launching the Paid Family Medical Leave insurance program and funding transportation improvements. It is now up to Governor Lamont and the Bond Commission to release these funds, and I will hold them to that.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

While we continue to be guided by public health experts on the steps we need to take to safely “reopen,” we also have an opportunity to build a stronger and more robust state.

Already we are working to ensure hospitals and health care providers have adequate stock of personal protective equipment. As a member of the Women’s Bipartisan Caucus, I have joined with colleagues in asking for an investigation of nursing home practices, as it is clear that some of these facilities have failed to adequately protect the health and safety of their residents.

Finally, I am proud to have led the effort in the House of Representatives to address the critical issue of expanding the provisions through which citizens may vote by absentee ballot. In addition to getting 70 of my colleagues to sign on to a letter urging our leadership to call us into special session, I am helping to craft statutory language to include accommodations during the pandemic.

I want to hear from you! More than ever, it is an honor and a privilege to represent you.