

## RESPONDING TO COVID-19

...in addition to day-to-day troubleshooting individual citizens' concerns.

- Cut unemployment insurance taxes on local businesses by excluding pandemic-related layoffs and paid directly into the fund (PA 21-5)
- Ensured towns can continue to meet virtually into 2022 (PA 21-2)
- Ensured legal representation if you're facing eviction (PA 21-34)
- Provided certain low-wage workers who were laid off during the pandemic first dibs on getting their jobs back (SB 658)
- Expanded workers' compensation benefits for PTSD to cover emergency responders, corrections workers, dispatchers and health care providers who were on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic (SB 660)
- Reformed nursing home staffing, policies and inventories (SB 1030)
- Increased funding to local health departments (SB 1202)
- Created a statewide policy on nursing home visitation (PA 21-71)
- Ensured our kids recover from this pandemic through expanded youth suicide prevention training, more outpatient services, required social emotional learning as part of teacher training, continued virtual parent/teacher conferences, addressed absenteeism, and ended lunch shaming when kids can't pay for their school lunches (PA 21-46)
- Created an audit of remote learning during COVID-19 to understand its impact on students and the school community (SB 1202)
- Established a commission to study the disparate impact of COVID-19 on different racial, ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic groups (HB 5614)



## SUPPORTING OUR SCHOOLS, TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

...because education is foundational to success.

- Created a new workforce pipeline program for individuals with disabilities (SA 21-10)
- Expanded childcare for parents who are working on their education (HB 6558)
- Fully funded free community college – meaning students can work on their Associates Degree without having to pay tuition out of pocket (SB 1202)
- Waived application fees to apply to CT colleges and universities on a special day each year (SB 1202)
- Allowed student college athletes to make money off use of their name, image and likeness (HB 6402)
- Raised awareness of child sex abuse (PA 21-64) and required comprehensive background checks of athletic leagues and youth camps (HB 6417)
- Improved sexual misconduct reporting, data collection, and our response to sexual assaults on CT college campuses (PA 21-81)

## TAKING CARE OF RESTAURANTS

...as one of the most hard-hit industries in our towns

- Created a tax-free week for restaurants (PA 21-2)
- Cut permit costs for nonprofit and private clubs (like the Army Navy Club and VFW) (PA 21-10)
- Cut red tape and made outdoor dining a permanent option for bars and restaurants (SB 1202)
- Protected businesses from third-party delivery services misrepresentation of business relationships (PA 21-166)



## STATE REPRESENTATIVE **CHRISTINE PALM** ASSISTANT MAJORITY LEADER & VICE CHAIR OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE **END-OF-SESSION UPDATE**

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Dear Friends:

I am honored to serve as your state representative, and I'm proud to represent the beautiful river towns of Chester, Deep River, Essex, and Haddam. There is far more connecting us than the Connecticut River, starting with an appreciation of what is best about living in a small town, while at the same time recognizing the wider world is not always as fortunate as we are.

And while I am elected by the approximately 24,000 residents in the 36th General Assembly District, every vote I take affects all of Connecticut's 3.6 million residents. I take very seriously this dual role: advocating strongly for our towns through bonding, securing local dollars in the state budget, liaising with our municipal leaders, and remaining in regular touch with our Congressional delegation to make sure that federal funds come our way -- even as I continue to care deeply about issues affecting the greater society and our environment.

As Vice Chair of the Environment Committee, Democratic Leader of the Internship Committee, and an Assistant Majority Leader, I try every day to advocate for you at the Capitol, while remaining accessible and responsive to you where you live.

Despite the lingering effects of the pandemic, we accomplished a great many things this session, including passing 239 bills through both chambers of the General Assembly. I summarize many of them here (followed by the Public Act number, or the House or Senate Bill number). E-mail is the best way to stay in touch. Drop me a line at [Christine.Palm@cga.ct.gov](mailto:Christine.Palm@cga.ct.gov).

Best,

Christine Palm



## INCREASING ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

...because healthcare is a basic human right.

- Ensured dental coverage for kids on parents' plans, up to 26 (PA 21-149)
- Made telehealth, included veterinary services, a permanent option (HB 6470 & PA 21-9)
- Provided new health care coverage to 40,000 low-income residents and families (SB 1202) regardless of immigration status (HB 6687)
- Provided police with better training and tools for dealing with opioid overdoses (PA 21-108)
- Strengthened rights for the deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing (PA 21-72)

- Declared racism a public health crisis and created a Commission on Racial Equity tasked with eliminating health disparities (PA 21-35)
- Improved mental health first aid training for paramedics (PA 21-134)
- Limited over-prescription of dangerous drugs (HB 6588)
- Established task forces on mental health and support services (HB 6588)
- Approved more resources to community providers (SB 1202)
- Abolished the State's practice of demanding repayment of past assistance when people are able to move out of poverty (PA 21-3)
- Increased awareness of behavioral and mental health services for children when they are discharged from a hospital and required the posting of the same information on school websites (HB 6510)

## PUTTING YOUR SAFETY FIRST

...because common-sense laws can save lives.

- Removed the so-called religious exemption for vaccinations of childhood diseases (MMR, Diphtheria, Pertussis), while grandfathering in students already in school (PA 21-6)
- Property tax breaks for volunteer firefighters and first responders (HB 6420)
- Blocked individuals a court determines high-risk from getting a gun (PA 21-67)
- Strengthened state regulations on tasers (PA 21-31)
- Improved mental health first aid training for paramedics (SB 102)
- Put community violence prevention programs on a path to sustainable funding and growth – to serve more victims of gun violence (PA 21-36)
- Ensured school athletic programs have emergency plans (PA 21-92)
- Created a grant program to reimburse volunteer firefighters in distressed municipalities for training and certification costs (SB 1202)
- Paved the way for our state's first Inspector General to independently investigate police-involved shootings (PA 21-8)
- Cracked down on online harassment with tougher penalties (PA 21-56)

## CREATING ECONOMIC DRIVERS

...because government should support small businesses

- Expanded the hemp industry in CT through licensed medical marijuana providers (PA 21-37)
- Allowed 16-year-olds to be eligible for more jobs at CT amusement parks (PA 21-38)
- Expanded the Small Business Express Program to help more local businesses grow and to expand businesses owned by women, veterans, persons with disabilities and members of minority communities (PA 21-188)
- Created equitable broadband through assessment of statewide access to the Web; grants to cities and towns for broadband projects; required internet providers to cover part of the state's costs (HB 6442)

## SERVING THOSE WHO SERVED

...because veterans deserve more than lip service.

- Expanded state benefits for LGBTQ+ veterans (PA 21-79)
- Established a tourism trail that showcases our veteran and military destinations (PA 21-105)
- Ensured funeral benefits for low-income veterans (HB 6480)
- Established the National Purple Star School Program to assist families with school registration, planning, counseling and other support services (PA 21-86)
- Directed state colleges and universities to update what credits they can award based on military training (HB 6402)

## HOUSING COST & FAIRNESS

...because a roof over one's head is a basic right.

- Championed affordable housing in our communities (PA 21-29)
- Guaranteed legal representation in eviction (PA 21-34)
- Resources to clean up and make public housing more energy efficient (PA 21-48)
- Strengthened numerous programs designed to keep people from losing their homes during tough times: Foreclosure Mediation, Lien Assistance and Emergency Mortgage Assistance (SB 891)

## STANDING UP FOR SENIORS

...because you have the right to age with dignity.

- Required homemaker/companion agency background checks (PA 21-37)
- Allowed towns to offer more seniors property tax breaks (PA 21-84)
- Ensured access to virtual visits and monitoring by loved ones for nursing home residents (PA 21-55)
- Strengthened rights for residents of long-term care facilities (PA 21-55)
- Fought age discrimination in the workplace – limited the need to list your age and other dates on job applications (PA 21-69)
- Ensured access to virtual visits and monitoring for nursing home residents (PA 21-55)

## VOTING RIGHTS FOR ALL OF US

...because voting is the bedrock of our democracy.

- Voters will get to decide in 2022 if we should have early, in-person voting (RA 21-1)
- In 2024 you'll decide if every registered voter in CT should be able to vote by absentee ballot (RA 21-2)
- Ended prison gerrymandering to make representation more accurate (PA 21-13)
- Guaranteed two hours off from work to vote in state and federal elections (SB 1202)
- Paved the way for permanent drop boxes for absentee ballots (SB 1202)
- Protected voters' personal information (SB 1202)

## WORKING TOWARD A GREENER CONNECTICUT

...because climate change is the existential crisis of our young people's lives.

- Modernized the Bottle Bill by raising deposits to 10 cents, applied deposits to more products, provided more money to towns and redemption centers so these cans and bottles don't end up as litter or in a landfill (PA 21-58)
- Banned toxic "PFAS" from food packaging and firefighting foam (SB 837)
- Created a competitive program for fuel cell projects that favors CT-made equipment and will redevelop brownfields and landfills (HB 6524)
- Helped approve more anaerobic digesters on farms (to produce methane from organic material) to address storm water runoff and food waste (PA 21-16)
- Balanced ecological and recreational needs while updating our Blue Plan for Long Island Sound (HJ 53)
- Improved clean-up procedures and notifications in sewage spills (PA 21-42)
- Empowered towns to better manage storm water on the local level (HB 6441)

## A VOICE FOR THE CONSUMER

...because you have the right to be informed and protected

- Provided more qualifying families a break on their state income tax through the Earned Income Tax Credit (SB 1202)
- Eliminated state income taxes on IRAs beginning in the 2023 (SB 1202)
- Required more companies to protect your personal data (PA 21-59) and kept genetic test results out of the hands of insurance companies (SB 841)
- Protected organ donors from higher insurance costs (PA 21-156)
- Required insurance companies to explain what's actually covered (PA 21-22)
- Lowered drug costs by requiring discounts to go to the consumer (PA 21-14)
- Strengthened cyber security and identity theft laws (PA 21-59)
- Banned the charging of extra graduation fees at CT colleges (PA 21-132)
- Established protections for utility customers: no more cancellation fees, and banned unpredictable variable rates (HB 6526)
- Repealed an old law on the books that kept adoptees born before 1983 from getting a copy of their original birth certificate (PA 21-21)
- Opened up year-round trout fishing (PA 21-12)
- Legalized adult use of cannabis for 21 and older; balanced health, treatment, public safety and equity; Erasure of past marijuana convictions; Home grow in 2023; Most state proceeds go towards equity and substance abuse treatment; and prevent CT from continuing to lose revenue to neighboring states (SB 1201)
- Legalized sports betting and online gaming (PA 21-23)
- Cut the sales tax on breast feeding supplies (SB 1202)

## THE FIGHT FOR EQUALITY

...because, yes, women, people of color, and the LGBTQ community still suffer disparate treatment.

- Prohibited insurance companies from charging victims of domestic violence higher rates (PA 21-93)
- Strengthened our domestic violence laws by adding coercive control to the definition and ensured immediate cash assistance for victims and their families (PA 21-78)
- Strengthened vacatur laws for victims of sex trafficking (HB 6657)
- Modernized our breastfeeding laws by requiring employers to provide working mothers privacy and access to a refrigerator and electrical outlet (PA 21-27)
- Required employers to provide a salary range for job openings so that salary negotiations are based on what the job is worth, not your salary history (PA 21-30)
- Prohibited pregnancy services centers that do not provide access to contraception or abortions from using deceptive advertising (PA 21-17)
- Improved sexual misconduct reporting, data collection, and response on CT college campuses (PA 21-81)
- Ensured domestic workers get upfront info on the terms of their employment and established a new education and training program (SB 1202)
- Strengthened the rights of families who are not biologically related and for parents who have children through the assistance of donors (PA 21-15)
- Erased most misdemeanors after 7 years and lesser felonies after 10 (PA 21-32)
- Working toward reduced recidivism by ending the practice of charging prisoners to use the phone (PA 21-54)