

Dear Neighbor,

This end-of-session mailer is one of the few ways I can reach everyone in the district I represent, and I'm very pleased to report this was a robust, productive, and in some ways, historic, legislative session.

Regarding the Budget: We cut more than \$650 million in taxes, invested heavily in the mental health of our children, made a firm commitment to increasing jobs and growing our economy, paid off millions in pension debt, and supported our non-profits, to name a few highlights. We did this against the backdrop of the ongoing pandemic, while keeping our state's "Rainy Day Fund" at a record high, and while continuing to invest in the schools and public safety of the towns of Chester, Deep River, Essex and Haddam, and we did it all while honoring the spending cap.

Passed Historic Legislation: The pandemic exposed many cracks in our systems, and we saw the importance of moving forward to a new, better "normal." Strong environmental protections, essential workers' rights, and women's reproductive choice, were among the most significant. In addition, this past session was very gratifying for me personally, as both House and Senate passed three bills I introduced:

- We created a new Office of Invasive Aquatic Species to address the threat of *hydrilla* and other invasive plants in our waterways (HB 5143);
- After four years, I was able to pass my bill to require the teaching of climate change in all public schools (HB 5285); and
- The first component of my bill to require the teaching of civics in all public schools, first written after the insurrection of Jan. 6, 2021, passed as part of a wider curriculum reform bill (HB 5285). It will establish the Connecticut Civics Education Task Force.

Additionally, a bill I introduced to raise compensation to our non-profits (LCO #874) was folded into the budget allocation, which resulted in more reimbursement to our non-profit service providers.

As always, please contact me at any time. Please sign up for my weekly newsletter at Christine.Palm@cga.ct.gov. I am honored to serve as your state representative.

All my best,



New Legislation: **Bolstering Reproductive Freedom**

As a member of the Reproductive Rights Caucus, I was part of a group of legislators working to ensure that here in Connecticut women will continue to have the right to choose. The Reproductive Freedom Defense Act (HB 5414) will:

- Expand eligibility to perform abortion care to include advanced nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, and physician assistants.
- Prevent Texas and other anti-choice states from targeting and extraditing Connecticut citizens (abortion providers, patients and their supporters) for an act that is not a crime here.
- Protect medical privacy by preventing the disclosure of medical information related to reproductive healthcare.
- Provide relief to those targeted by other states. You may now sue to recover damages, attorney fees, or costs related to a lawsuit brought against you by another state.

New Legislation: **Essential Workers' Rights**

We put our money where our mouths are regarding essential workers. To support them, we:

- Toughened the penalty for public contractors who under-pay or withhold wages and benefits, created a public registry of these individuals, and established a process for revoking the licenses of repeat offenders (PA 22-17)
- Helped front-line, private sector workers access premium pay, if they were certain essential employees who had to work through the pandemic (HB 5506)
- Expanded access to special relief funding for specific front-line workers who had to work during COVID and who became sick as a result (HB 5506)
- Protected the rights of employees by prohibiting employers from requiring their employees to attend meetings solely to listen to the employer's views on politics or religion (PA 22-24)



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
CHRISTINE PALM
PROUDLY SERVING CHESTER, DEEP RIVER, ESSEX, HADDAM

CAPITOL UPDATE 2022

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CAPITOL UPDATE 2022

FROM STATE REPRESENTATIVE

CHRISTINE PALM

PROUDLY SERVING CHESTER, DEEP RIVER, ESSEX, HADDAM

New Legislation: **Juvenile Justice Reform**

Although car thefts have actually been declining for years, incidents ticked upward in 2022 because of the economic and emotional toll of the pandemic. We responded by diverting youth from illegal behavior, enhancing police resources, and punishing repeat offenders through HB 5506, which will:

- Invest in Youth Service Bureaus and Juvenile Review Boards
- Increase work opportunities for young adults
- Expand alternatives to incarceration
- Expand hands-on training for police
- Address laboratory and case backlogs
- Expand use of GPS monitoring
- Toughen penalties for vehicle thefts
- Create more crisis training for our police
- Fund state and local task forces to address gun violence and auto thefts
- We also made it harder to resell catalytic converters (PA 22-43); and
- Targeted gun stores that don't have a functional alarm system (HB 5305)

New Legislation: **Expanding Healthcare Access**

Progress in making healthcare more affordable and accessible includes:

- Allowed pharmacists, in collaboration with your doctor, to adjust more medications without requiring as many in-person visits
- Established a statewide stroke registry
- Made \$12M available for tobacco prevention and cessation
- Strengthened the state's intervention and response to lead poisoning and prevention
- Expanded screenings for breast and cervical cancer
- Ensured more psychiatric treatment beds
- Created new home visit pilot for newborns
- Continued Telehealth options

CONTACT ME ANY TIME:

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FY 22-23 BUDGET: \$650 MILLION IN TAX CUTS

The Budget: Investing in Children

The pandemic revealed the dire emotional, educational and financial straights our kids are in. The new budget will:

- Increase funding for infant and toddler care programs
- Increase pay to childcare workers to attract and retain more educators
- Expand successful Birth-to-Three Program
- Assist local childcare facilities with renovation costs
- Approve state tax credit for childcare
- Create new walk-ins for mental health emergencies
- Help school-based health centers develop new mental health programming
- Assist local schools in expanded mental health staff and access to care
- Provide mental health training to parents, students, and pediatricians

The Budget: Cutting Taxes

To combat historic inflation, which was fueled by the pandemic, supply chain interruptions, and the war in Ukraine, we cut more than \$650 Million in taxes. This new budget (HB 5506) will:

- Will reimburse towns with higher mill rates
- Cut state gas tax to zero through December 1, 2022
- Increase state income tax credit for property owners from \$200 to \$300
- End pension and annuity tax on retirees making less than \$75,000/yr
- Approve state tax credit for childcare
- Expand employers' student loan payment tax credit
- Give childcare rebate of \$250 per child, up to three children

The Budget: Growing Our Economy

To help Connecticut businesses, the new budget will:

- Lower the business tax rate for unemployment insurance, effectively making the federal loan repayment for the coming year on behalf of businesses
- Establish JobsCT program – helping companies in target industries earn rebates against insurance premiums and state taxes for meeting job targets
- Create additional student loan assistance programs
- Expand successful Manufacturing Pipeline program
- Increase work opportunities for young adults
- Establish student loan reimbursement program for in-demand health care and mental health workers (HB 5506)
- Expand the debt-free community college program to more first-time, part-time students (HB 5506)

The Budget: Supporting Our Non-Profit Community

For too long, the state has shortchanged the non-profits who serve as subcontractors in essential services — especially in the area of healthcare. I was honored to work closely with them, and with my colleagues on the Appropriations Committee, to increase reimbursements to our vital non-profit providers by \$220.4 million, which will help these community providers keep up with inflation. We also invested in the arts through support to museums, theaters and other attractions.

The Budget: Aid to Our Towns

Bringing money back from Hartford is a big part of my job. In addition to bonding money for various capital projects, I secured funds for our towns' schools and public safety.

CHESTER: \$1,238,405

ESSEX: \$500,298

DEEP RIVER: \$2,019,766

HADDAM: \$2,737,017

NEW LEGISLATION: HELPING ALL OF CONNECTICUT



Rep. Palm and colleagues speak to the media about environmental bills.

Environmental Protection & Responding to Climate Change

We passed some of the most significant environmental protection legislation ever this year, including:

- The Connecticut Clean Air Act, which supports developing carbon-neutral plans for new transportation projects (PA 22-25)
- Set a goal of reaching zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040 from electricity supplied to you (PA 22-5)
- Created a public health reporting system for homeowners with unsafe levels of salt in their drinking water (HB 5506)
- Expanded state farmland restoration programming to include climate-smart farming and forestry practices (HB 5506)
- Expanded financing to develop zero emission vehicle infrastructure, build more solar power and fuel cells, and reinforce our electric grid against the effects of climate change (PA 22-6 & PA 22-14)
- Expanded eligibility for participation in the state's brownfield remediation program. (PA 22-68)
- Expanded a producer's responsibility to help recycle gas cylinders (PA 22-27)
- Established Office of Aquatic Invasive Species
- Invested in repopulating native salmon and eel populations

Serving Those Who Serve Us

We supported those in uniform through:

- Guaranteed CT veterans in-state tuition rates (HB 5301)
- Raised equipment standards, and secured more local funding for firefighters who leave service with a cancer diagnosis. (SB 313)
- Funding to local volunteer fire departments who respond to emergencies on certain state highways (HB 5506)
- A new, local-option property tax exemption equal to 10% of home values for more veterans (PA 22-34)
- Creation of a new license plate for veterans who served in Afghanistan or Iraq (PA 22-34)
- Extended employment protections to police officers who seek and receive mental health care services (PA 22-64)
- Improved training for police handling incidents involving individuals with mental or physical disabilities (PA 22-64)

Making Connecticut More Equitable

Through SB 1, we:

- Improved demographic data collection
- Required the teaching of Asian American and Pacific Islander studies in public schools
- Required most publicly owned facilities to provide free menstrual products (HB 5506)
- Increased health care coverage to undocumented immigrants, up to age 12 (HB 5506)
- Created a Hate Crimes Investigation Unit within the State Police, information sharing between departments. (PA 22-9)
- Limited the use of solitary confinement and expanded the office of Corrections Ombudsman (PA 22-18)
- Established June 19th as Juneteenth Independence Day. This new state holiday will forever celebrate the independence of African Americans freed from slavery (SB 350)
- Invested in affordable housing

Supporting Our Teachers and Students

Through SB 1 and HB 5506, we:

- Extended the renewal time for teaching certificates
- Ensured teachers get an uninterrupted 30 minutes for lunch
- Expanded scholarships for minority teachers
- Ensured more districts will be eligible for the federal School Breakfast program
- Doubled grants to school districts for bilingual education
- Established new reimbursement grant to assist schools in upgrading their HVAC systems, and ensured regular inspections and reporting on their operation
- Approved state tax credit for childcare
- Allowed high school graduates access to low-interest loans for attending occupational training programs (SB 103)
- Provided parents and students with more occupational opportunities and helped schools partner with more local businesses (SB 228)



Rep. Palm explains the legislative process to Valley Regional High School students.