

STATE REPRESENTATIVE | DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER

Hilda E. Santiago

PROUDLY SERVING MERIDEN

Dear Neighbor,

I hope you and your loved ones are safe and well. Without question, our world and our community have dramatically changed over the past few months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 legislative session faced more challenges than previous years, culminating earlier than anticipated as our state became gravely affected by the outbreak.

However, as the state progresses further into reopening, my colleagues and I are eager to return for special session this summer. I am proud to be part of a group of legislators demanding action, and I am thankful that Governor Lamont has informed the General Assembly of his intent to call us into special session very soon to take immediate action on police accountability and transparency as well as expanded absentee ballots for the November election. Both issues directly affect our minority communities and we must do everything within our legislative body to find solutions.

As a proud member of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus, I am supportive and committed to continuing to work and vote for the necessary changes in support of our Black and Brown communities that are still experiencing abuse, exploitation and socio-economic oppression.

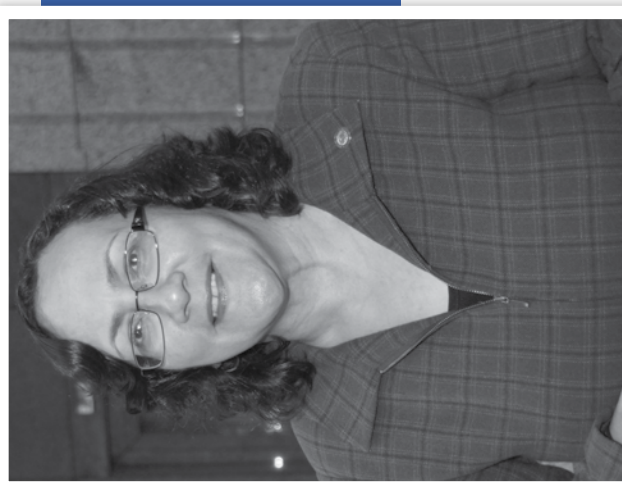
This newsletter is intended to provide you with helpful information, useful resources, as well as an overview of some of the work my office has been doing in recent months.

If you have any questions, 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,

Hilda E. Santiago

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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 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.

If you are having trouble paying your residential mortgage or rent, we have worked with banks and landlords to provide you additional time to put together payments. For more information on these programs, visit portal.ct.gov/coronavirus/information-for/homeowners-and-renters.

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 to farmers, to helping our schools deal with unexpected expenditures. For more on these, please visit my website: www.housedems.ct.gov/SantiagoH.

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

ADVOCATING FOR YOU DURING THIS TIME

This has been a remarkably challenging time for all of us. My office has worked with hundreds of you to fix issues with your unemployment applications, help your business apply for financial aid, and with the DMV to get your car registered. I know that it is during these challenging times when we need government help and services the most.

That’s why I have worked with my colleagues to advocate for all of you with the Governor and his administration. I am proud to say that because of our advocacy, we have expanded tele-medicine, brought additional COVID-19 testing sites to our community, expanded affordable childcare options for front-line workers, and delayed due dates for state income taxes and municipal property taxes. If there are more ways that we can make state government work better for you, please let me know.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

While we continue to follow the guidance of the 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.

We are already working to ensure hospitals, health care providers, and nursing homes have adequate stock of personal protective equipment. And we are working with farmers and food banks to protect and localize our food supply chain.

Your stories and experiences are important to helping us improve the quality of life for you. How well did the safety net work for you and your family? How can we do better? What services were not available that you really needed? I want to hear from you!

More than ever, it continues to be an honor and privilege to represent you.



THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION THAT WASN'T

When we began this year’s legislative session on February 5th, I expected to be working on many of the issues that you all have prioritized for me including reducing the cost of health insurance, making it easier to exercise your right to vote, and bringing back more support for our schools. This work continues now, and will continue through any special session of the legislature this summer or fall, and into next year.

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 community:

BONDED AID	FY 20	FY 21
TOWN AID ROAD	663,656	663,656
LOCAL CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT (LOCIP)	508,219	508,219
GRANTS FOR MUNICIPAL PROJECTS	1,290,737	1,290,737

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.

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THE STATE’S EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM,
WHICH PROVIDES TEXT MESSAGE NOTIFICATIONS TO USERS.

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COVIDCT TO 888-777.

APPROACHING SPECIAL SESSION

In early June, legislative leadership and the Governor agreed that it was time for members of the General Assembly to meet and pass reforms in response to the current pressing issues our state faces.

ABSENTEE VOTING

In dealing with the ongoing concerns of COVID-19, it is our intention to ensure that everyone who has health concerns has the right to vote by absentee ballot in the upcoming November general election. No one should have to choose between their right to vote and being safe. You should be receiving an application soon from the Secretary of the State for an absentee ballot for the August primary if you are registered with a party. The Governor has also already issued an executive order to provide for absentee balloting for the November election, should there be no vaccine for COVID-19. However, we are also planning to go into special session to pass legislation to clarify this issue if needed. Essentially, this legislation would indicate that voters have the option to vote by absentee ballot regardless of “his or her illness,” but also include the reasonable fear of contracting or spreading illness.

POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

We also intend to take immediate action on legislation pertaining to police accountability and transparency in the wake of the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis and other racially charged incidents that have captured the attention of our entire nation. These actions are unacceptable and those responsible must be held accountable. We will be looking at a variety of measures that need to be taken within our state; including ending police immunity for such acts, requiring body cameras in all towns, reforming certain police policies and procedures, among other solutions.

