

Dear neighbor,

As House Chair of the Committee on Children, I take our children's future very seriously. It is so important that we provide them with a healthy, stable and safe living and learning environment. They are, after all, our future!

This report outlines many of the advances we were able to make. As always, I have pushed the link between animal cruelty, child abuse and domestic violence. We created a task force of committed individuals to continue to work on the ravages of domestic violence. We confronted the problem of overuse of restraint and seclusion in our schools. And we worked closely with our Department of Children and Families (DCF) to solve issues of abuse and neglect and the high cost to a child's development if left unaddressed. We are also getting some very useful data on chronic absenteeism. Our state has the highest achievement gap in the nation and it is clear that if a child is not attending school they can't possibly be learning.

Please take the time to visit our Kids Report Card Web site. We are the only state in the country to formally pursue a data-informed Children's agenda. It has always been my position that we should fund programs that are working and the only way to find out what is actually making children better off is to insist on data. I think you will be pleased at what we have been able to do when you visit [www.cga.ct.gov/kid/rba](http://www.cga.ct.gov/kid/rba)

Please contact me with any questions you might have on state programs, the budget, or to help you with any issue.

Sincerely,

Diana Urban



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

DIANA URBAN

PROUDLY SERVING THE 43RD HOUSE DISTRICT | STONINGTON & NORTH STONINGTON

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING  
HARTFORD, CT 06106-1591  
CAPITOL: 800-842-8267  
[WWW.HOUSEDEMS.CT.GOV/URBAN](http://WWW.HOUSEDEMS.CT.GOV/URBAN)

PRSR STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
HARTFORD, CT  
Permit No. 3937



STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
**DIANA URBAN**

PROUDLY SERVING THE 43RD HOUSE DISTRICT  
STONINGTON & NORTH STONINGTON

**CAPITOL UPDATE 2015**



[www.facebook.com/RepUrban](http://www.facebook.com/RepUrban)



*Working hard with my co-chair, Senator Bartolomeo during a hearing*



*Spending rare quiet time relaxing at home*

### RESTRAINT & SECLUSION IN OUR SCHOOLS

When I first asked for data on restraint and seclusion, I never anticipated the number that would be reported -- 35,892 in one year. It was also of concern that parents were not being consistently informed when their child was secluded or restrained, and that schools themselves were unsure of guidelines. I am pleased that we have made great strides in policy that will keep our students and staff safe and keep parents informed. We have prohibited "prone" physical restraint, prohibited seclusion for the sole purpose of punishment and made it mandatory that a parent be notified immediately if their child is restrained or secluded. I realize that there is research that indicates we should do away with restraint completely and embrace less traumatic alternatives. We are committed to continuing to consult with experts and explore best practices.

### ADJUSTING SCHOOL BUDGETS

I can't tell you how many times people have asked me why there is a minimum budget requirement that requires a town to spend the same amount or more every year. As an economist, this lack of flexibility speaks to a disincentive for towns to collaborate on education or to find ways to be more efficient in delivering education. This year, we offered flexibility to towns with low rates of poverty that are experiencing declining enrollments. These towns can now set a budget that is 3% below their minimum budget requirement. It is a small but significant step in promoting efficiency.



*Accepting an award from Annie Hornish of the Humane Society of the United States*

### PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR OUR FAMILIES



#### THIS SESSION WE WERE ABLE TO PASS LEGISLATION:

- Protecting our kids from harmful pesticides
- Sustaining the Long Island Sound as a commercial and recreational entity
- Encouraging and supporting farmers and restoring farmland and
- Addressing the problem of microbeads in personal care products - Microbeads absorb pollutants and end up in the food chain when marine animals consume them.

### CONCUSSIONS AND YOUTH ATHLETES

Concussions are still a main subject of concern for our athletes - but in particular, our youth athletes. I am pleased that this July our concussion legislation went into effect. Now parents and athletes will receive extensive education on the nature of concussions, rules concerning return to play after a collision or suspected head injury, and parents are now required to sign an informed consent form.

In addition, after some great work by our Concussion Task Force, we were able to begin addressing our youngest athletes. Current research indicates that the younger the athlete the more dangerous the concussion can be. Now when parents sign their child up for a youth athletic activity they will be given an information sheet on concussions. This will also be available electronically. Many thanks to former UConn QB Casey Corcoran (pictured below) for his concern about concussions and his immeasurable help in getting this legislation passed.



### COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY AND STUDENT DEBT

Sixty-four percent of college graduates in our state have student loan debt with interest rates that are an enormous burden. This year, Connecticut became the first state in the nation to create a Student Loan Bill of Rights which established the Office of the Student Loan Ombudsman. This office will regulate student loan services, compile data on student complaints, develop a financial literacy course and help parents and students navigate the often cumbersome student loan process. Our own Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority (CHESLA) will offer a fixed interest rate of 4.95% down from its current 6.75%. This is significantly lower than the Federal PLUS loan rate of 6.84%. It is critical that we continue to find ways to support our kids as they pursue their education and their dreams.

### VARIABLE ELECTRIC RATES

Many of you have contacted me about electricity providers that offer a low introductory rate that balloons rapidly. I am pleased that Connecticut has become the first state in the nation to require variable rate suppliers to give customers a 60 day notice before the end of their contracts. They cannot charge these customers a termination or early cancellation fee and they must give customers 72 hours to switch to standard service.

### STATE REPRESENTATIVE

# DIANA URBAN

PROUDLY SERVING THE 43RD HOUSE DISTRICT  
STONINGTON & NORTH STONINGTON

### SECURITY FREEZES ON CHILDREN'S CREDIT REPORTS

I was surprised to learn the extent of the problem of child identity theft. This new law will allow parents to freeze their child's credit so it is impossible to take out a line of credit in their name. Once a child is no longer a minor, their credit will be automatically unfrozen. It is sad that we have to take this step, but anyone who has dealt with identity theft knows how destructive it can be.



*Senator Maynard and me with Gizmo the amazing therapy dog.*

### IMPLEMENTING THE CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH PLAN AND EXPANDING ANIMAL THERAPY

After the tragedy at Sandy Hook, we passed a comprehensive Mental Emotional And Behavioral Health Plan. We believe this is so important that my Co-chair of the Committee on Children and I have taken an active role in assuring it is implemented in a timely fashion. We created an Advisory Board that will track progress and submit an annual report detailing how we are taking care of our young children. We are active participants in this process.

In addition, we strengthened our animal therapy protocol for children experiencing trauma. The comfort and relief that therapy animals bring is amazing to see. We had many parents ask us to continue to make therapy animals a part of trauma relief. It is wonderful to have a partnership between our Department of Children and Families and our volunteer animal community to respond to incidences of trauma. I plan on continuing to expand the use of this human/animal bond.