

FIGHTING FOR OUR CITY

Dear Neighbor,

It remains a privilege and honor to serve as your state representative. The 2023 legislative session is in the rearview mirror, and I wanted to take a moment to check in and share some highlights from the past several months.

As co-chair of the Appropriations Committee, I am proud to deliver a budget that adheres to our fiscal guardrails while still providing hundreds of millions in more funding to our local schools, colleges and universities, and services for our most vulnerable residents. As part of our historic tax cuts, families of four who make \$50,000 annually will pay no state income taxes. This is another important step in making Connecticut affordable for everyone.

More importantly, we did it by working together – without partisan politics. We prioritized education, non-profits and invested in public safety without the fighting we often see in Washington.

I'd love to hear from you if you would like more details or have any questions on the initiatives addressed in this legislative update.

All my best,



BIG WINS FOR NEW HAVEN

- ✓ Increased New Haven's State Education Cost Sharing Funding to over \$165 million
- ✓ Largest Income Tax Cut in State History
- ✓ \$650,000 in Bond Funding for Our Parks
- ✓ Over \$750,000 for New Haven Port Authority
- ✓ Millions of dollars to Support Our Community Organizations
- ✓ Funds for Gun Violence Prevention and Youth Services
- ✓ Eliminated Even More Taxes for Retirees
- ✓ Secured an additional \$300 million in state aid for our schools, roads, and to assist with keeping our taxes down



CAPITOL UPDATE 2023

FROM STATE REPRESENTATIVE TONI E. WALKER

PROUDLY SERVING NEW HAVEN

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FROM STATE REPRESENTATIVE TONI E. WALKER

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GETTING PEOPLE BACK ON THEIR FEET

- Ensured those leaving prison have a state ID or driver’s license
- Made more people convicted of a crime before the age of 21 eligible for parole
- Created reentry success plans for kids getting out of correctional or judicial facilities
- Expanded assistance to refugees
- Assisting people who no longer qualify for Medicaid by providing two months of premium assistance to enroll on the health insurance exchange
- Created pilot programs for substance abuse and mental health issues at correctional facilities
- Expanded eligibility to short-term financial assistance

SUPPORTING WORKERS AND SMALL BUSINESSES

- Required full disclosure of hidden fees on small business loans, ensured access to judicial hearings in a dispute, and required any loan offers to be good for at least three days
- Cut the number of reporting requirements for businesses
- Permanently allowed restaurants to sell alcohol for off-site consumption
- Supported CT farm wineries by allowing them to open up to three retail locations
- Protected workers whose health benefits are terminated by an employer following a strike or labor dispute
- Made it easier for small contractors to bid on state projects

HISTORIC FUNDING FOR OUR SCHOOLS

- Prevented any town from receiving a funding cut to their local schools
- Continued our commitment to funding local boards of education with an honest ECS formula
- Invested over \$240 million in public education for the 2024-25 school year including Open Choice, magnet schools, charter schools and vocational programs



A HELPING HAND TO COLLEGE STUDENTS

- Expanded debt-free community college – including subsidies for returning students
- Created a Student Loan Ombudsman to help students, graduates, and their families deal with student loans
- Created a student loan reimbursement program, starting in July 2024, that will repay borrowers up to \$20,000 in student loan debt
- Established lower state-backed loan refinancing rates for licensed nurses with student loans
- Prohibited colleges and universities from withholding transcripts due to outstanding debt
- Stabilized our state colleges and universities

HELPING KIDS LIVE THEIR BEST LIVES

- Allowed trained childcare providers to administer EpiPens
- Required a state audit of all standardized testing
- Required boards of education to provide translator services and established rights for multilingual learners
- Required more play-based learning from pre-K to grade 5
- Created reimbursements to schools who purchase local foods for their school meals
- Required high school students to take a financial literacy class before graduating
- Banned child marriage
- Required funds from the state’s legal settlement with vape-giant JUUL to go to helping kids under 21

IMPROVING HEALTHCARE

- Allowed over-the-counter drugs such as Narcan to be sold through regulated vending machines
- Expanded services for telehealth appointments
- Expanded pharmacy services to include vaccine administration of CDC immunizations, testing for COVID, flu, HIV, and preventative HIV treatment
- Established the Office of the Behavioral Health Advocate to help providers and patients navigate our insurance system
- Expanded workers’ comp coverage for anyone who experiences PTSD at work
- Created a statewide Drug Discount Card Program, regulated pharmaceutical sales reps, and banned anticompetitive loopholes in healthcare contracts
- Created early detection screening for lung cancer
- Required newborn screening for cytomegalovirus
- Expanded coverage for gender-affirming care and strengthened protections for those who provide that care
- Created a harm reduction pilot program to prevent overdoses—allowing people to access fentanyl and xylazine tests, receive counseling and other services
- Established a dedicated funding source for the bulk purchase of Narcan for towns, schools, local police and health departments and EMS companies
- Required the recommendation of Narcan when opioids are prescribed

PROTECTING RENTERS

- Increased municipal fines to \$2,000 for rental property violations like unsanitary or unsafe living conditions
- Required landlords to offer walk-throughs prior to signing a lease
- Capped rental application fees at \$50
- Erased judicial records for renters who win eviction cases
- Required more timely return of security deposits
- Capped late charges for past due rent

