

STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
**MARY WELANDER**  
PROUDLY SERVING  
ORANGE, DERBY, WOODBRIDGE

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The pandemic produced numerous challenges, highlighted existing issues, and caused upset and heartache to too many residents in the 114th District and across the state of Connecticut. I am proud of the way our communities and individuals rose to the challenge of caring for one another during this difficult time. Throughout the very unique 2021 legislative session, I worked to address these new challenges and existing concerns by passing over 350 bills and resolutions with my colleagues. This session I advocated for more accessible, affordable, and equitable public health policy, increased access to mental health resources, and support for our seniors, schools, and small businesses.

While I wish I could share everything that was worked on, this summary features some of the key policy changes that affect Orange, Derby, and Woodbridge. If you have questions on any of these items, or anything else I can help with, please reach out anytime.

All the best,



Mary Welander



**CONTACT ME:**

Sign up for email updates on my web page:

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**CAPITOL UPDATE 2021**

Legislative Office Building, Hartford, CT 06106-1591  
Capitol: 860-240-8500 | 800-842-8267  
[www.housedems.ct.gov/Welander](http://www.housedems.ct.gov/Welander)



## STATE REPRESENTATIVE MARY WELANDER

### INVESTING IN THE PEOPLE OF DERBY, ORANGE, AND WOODBRIDGE

- Eliminated state income taxes on IRA income over time, beginning in the 2023 tax year
- Created an agricultural education program to connect local farms with surrounding communities
- Initiated a new workforce pipeline program for individuals with disabilities
- Expanded childcare services for parents who are pursuing their education
- Created a grant program to reimburse volunteer firefighters in distressed municipalities for training and certification costs, and waived the cost of background checks
- Increased property tax breaks for volunteer firefighters and first responders
- Expanded workers' compensation benefits for EMS workers, corrections officers, and dispatchers to cover post-traumatic stress injuries
- Established the "Connecticut Essential Workers COVID-19 Assistance Program" to provide coverage for lost-wages and out-of-pocket costs to essential workers who then became sick with COVID-19

### NO TAX INCREASES & NEW TAX RELIEF

- Maintained an historically high Rainy Day Fund of \$3.5 billion
- Paid down \$1 billion towards legacy pension debt
- Increased funding for non-profits
- Helped avoid strikes at nursing homes and group homes
- Increased the Earned Income Tax Credit for tax breaks for working families
- Rejected tax hikes on insurance policies

### IMPROVING ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

As Vice Chair of the Children's Committee, I made student access to mental health services a priority. I am proud to say that my School-Based Mental Health Clinic proposal passed through the legislature as well as my bill to provide behavioral and mental health information to families through hospitals and board of education websites.

**To make healthcare more accessible, we passed new laws that:**

- Required health, vision, and dental plans to cover dependents up to age 26 on their parents' insurance plans
- Continued expanded "telehealth" for two years
- Fought for better insurance coverage for breast health; required a space be given to breastfeeding mothers to pump at work, and gave tax exemptions on breastfeeding supplies

### SUPPORTING OUR STUDENTS & SCHOOLS



Committed to the success and safety of our children, I was proud to advocate for informational guides that will be distributed to parents by youth athletic leagues and camps that will help recognize behavior linked to child abuse. We also now require background checks of coaches and employees of youth camps.

**Additionally, the legislature:**

- Established a youth suicide prevention training program, strengthened mental health resources for kids, and required teachers to have training in social-emotional learning
- Provided additional support to school districts to use evidence-based models for reading instruction for our youngest students - to ensure every student will be able to read by the end of third grade
- Supported stronger teacher preparation programs to ensure adequate training in dyslexia and reading intervention strategies
- Improved reporting, data collection, and response processes surrounding sexual misconduct on CT college campuses making them safer for students

### MORE STATE FUNDING FOR OUR DISTRICT

"We passed a responsible, **bi-partisan budget** on-time, without raising taxes. This budget pays down debt left from prior legislatures, and increases funding for our schools, small businesses and non-profits. Education continues to be one of my priorities and I successfully fought to secure more state funding for our schools. Derby will **receive additional funds** focused on literacy success. Both Orange and Woodbridge schools were slated to lose state funds, but during negotiations, I went to bat for my community's students and **secured consistent education funding over the next two fiscal years.** I am hopeful that these additional state funds, along with federal funds coming from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), will help our towns balance local budgets and continue to provide vital services for all residents."

### HELPING SENIORS



#### Woodbridge Senior Center gets \$300,000

I am proud to have advocated and secured \$300,000 from the state for the Woodbridge Senior Center to renovate the facility and better serve the community.

**To support our seniors, we passed the following laws to make it easier to live and retire in Connecticut:**

- Enabled towns to lower the age to 65 to provide property tax relief for seniors
- Continued to phase out the state income tax on pensions and annuities - exempting 28% over the next 2 years, which will exempt in total 70% of this income from state taxes for most seniors
- Required background checks at homemaker-companion agencies
- Strengthened rights for residents of long-term care facilities
- Put in place strong consumer protections on long-term care insurance to prevent significant, unexpected rate increases and ensure the availability of more affordable products

### SERVING OUR VETERANS

- Established a tourism trail that showcases our veteran and military destinations
- Guaranteed veterans are honored with dignity by ensuring state funding is available to help with funeral costs if needed
- Established the National Purple Star School Program to assist military families moving into the state with school registration, planning, counseling and other support services
- Directed state colleges and universities to update the credits they can award based on military training

### INVESTING IN MAIN STREET

- Developed a program in the Department of Economic and Community Development to provide up to \$5 million in grants to regional economic development entities
- Expanded the successful Small Business Express Program to bring in more private capital and state money to small businesses and start-ups
- Ensured that no business will see its unemployment insurance (UI) tax bills go up because of COVID-related layoffs, and reformed the UI tax system to bring down costs for most businesses
- Supported funding the preservation and revitalization of historic properties and landmarks
- Provided relief to our local restaurants by creating a tax-free week, allowing continued alcohol to-go and delivery sales, and made outdoor dining a permanent option