

STATE REPRESENTATIVE CRISTIN MCCARTHY VAHEY

Dear Fellow Fairfielders,

2021 has brought its share of challenges and opportunities, with COVID continuing to be a topic of many conversations. Unlike 2020, which necessitated the abrupt end of the legislative session, this year the General Assembly was able to convene and pass over 350 resolutions. Besides a bipartisan budget with more money for Fairfield and no new taxes, we also provided additional support for our seniors, schools, and small businesses, moved towards greater health equity, and increased access to mental health resources. While maintaining our \$3 billion Rainy Day Fund and paying an additional \$1 billion towards our pension liability, we strengthened our economy and invested in infrastructure, sustainability, and education.

Together with colleagues, I led efforts on zoning reform and planning for our state's future and development; equal access to parentage for the LGBTQ+ community; pedestrian and bicycle safety; community access to hybrid and online meetings; increased suicide prevention training; integration of social and emotional learning; access to original birth certificates for adult adoptees; and support for our restaurants with expanded access to outdoor dining.

I joined with constituents to champion improved voting access, erasure of criminal records years after conviction, additional data and support for those who experience sexual assault on college campuses, and expansion of protection orders for those at risk of harming themselves or others.

COVID has forced us to face our vulnerabilities and emphasized both our connection to one another and the structural inequalities that exist in our society. We will get through this by continuing to get vaccinated, practicing mitigation measures (masks, distance, hygiene) and testing when symptomatic.

As always, please do not hesitate to reach out to me via cell phone (203) 522-3037 or at Cristin.McCarthyVahey@cga.ct.gov.

All my best,

Cristin McCarthy Vahey

It is more important than ever that we get our state vaccinated. Please scan the QR code to receive information on where and how to get the vaccine.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
CRISTIN MCCARTHY VAHEY

PROUDLY SERVING THE 133RD HOUSE DISTRICT | FAIRFIELD

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CAPITOL UPDATE 2021

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PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

As co-chair of the Planning and Development Committee, I have the privilege of leading passage of bills within our committee. This year, the legislature:

- Passed comprehensive zoning reform that will help address housing affordability, expand access to accessory dwelling units, and created the Commission on Connecticut's Future and Development (PA 21-29)
- Provided access to original birth certificates for all adult adoptees (PA 21-21)
- Made online "zoom" and hybrid meetings a permanent legal option for municipal and government organizations (SB 1202)
- Supported Connecticut restaurants by streamlining outdoor dining approvals (SB 1202 and SA 21-3)

ADDRESSING INEQUALITY

The past year has highlighted some of the extreme inequality right here in Connecticut. The General Assembly took action by:

- Passing "Clean Slate" legislation which will expunge the records of people convicted of misdemeanors and some felonies after either a seven or ten year waiting period, depending on their conviction. (PA 21-32)
- Providing equal treatment for children born to same sex couples, allowing equal access to parentage for LGBTQ+ families and for parents who have children through the assistance of donors. (PA 21-15)
- Declaring racism a public health crisis and creating a Commission on Racial Equity tasked with eliminating health disparities. (PA 21-35)



FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Building on work from previous sessions, the legislature passed a number of laws to improve our state's fiscal stability, as well as support many Connecticut businesses:

- Reached a bipartisan compromise to reduce unemployment taxes beginning in 2024 for roughly 75% of state businesses while simultaneously stabilizing the unemployment trust fund. (PA 21-200)
- Maintained \$3.5 billion in the Rainy Day Fund and paid down an additional \$1 billion of our pension liability (SA 21-15)
- Created a first in the nation Baby Bonds program, investing \$3,200 for each infant enrolled in Medicaid (SB 1202)
- Invested in our cities by creating the Community Investment Fund 2030, designed to invest \$1.5 billion in economic development, education, housing, and IT infrastructure (SB 1202)

ACCESS TO VOTING

As a member of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, I was pleased to support several important initiatives that expand residents' access to voting:

- Early voting will be on the ballot in 2022 and no excuse absentee ballots for all voters will be on the ballot in 2024 if approved by the next legislature (RA 21-1 and RA 21-2)
- Drop boxes for the return of absentee ballots are now permanent (SB 1202)
- Restoration of voting rights to those convicted of a felony and on parole, special parole or confined to a community residence (SB 1202)
- Absentee ballot COVID exemptions are extended through the November 2021 elections (SB 1202)
- Online application for absentee ballots (SB 1202)
- Absentee ballots provided electronically to visually impaired residents (SB 1202)



PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE SAFETY

Ever since I was an RTM member, I have been advocating for bike and pedestrian safety. After years of collaborative advocacy, the legislature passed PA 21-28:

- Vehicles must stop for pedestrians at the curb who are indicating an intent to walk
- A statewide Vision Zero Council will create statewide policy and practice aimed at eliminating traffic related fatalities
- Municipalities may retain a greater percentage of the surcharge for certain motor vehicle violations
- Local traffic authorities may lower speed limits without state approval
- Towns and cities may designate Pedestrian Safety Zones
- Distracted driving fines are increased
- "Dooring" is prohibited. Aimed particularly at protecting bicyclists who are riding past parked vehicles, this is an important reminder to act with caution when opening doors adjacent to a roadway



HEALTH AND WELLNESS

COVID has highlighted the need for adaptations to our healthcare system and coverage and this session we made some critical changes:

- Continued telehealth coverage and access (HB 6470)
- Ensured access to nursing home virtual visits and monitoring for residents (PA 21-55) and created a statewide policy on visitation (PA 21-71)
- Required suicide prevention training in local health departments and mental health training for healthcare professionals (PA 21-46)
- Expanded Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) coverage for postpartum care to 12 months after a woman gives birth (SB 1202)
- Exempted breastfeeding supplies from sales and use tax (SB 1202)
- Required employer provided areas for breastfeeding be free from intrusion (PA 21-27)



PROTECTING OUR RESIDENTS

Safety goes hand in hand with health and wellness. This session we:

- Prevented individuals at risk of harm to themselves or others from accessing a gun, ammunition or other deadly weapons (PA 21-67)
- Improved sexual misconduct reporting, data collection, and our response to sexual assaults on CT college campuses (PA 21-81)
- Strengthened domestic violence laws including immediate cash assistance for victims (PA 21-78)
- Required the use of rear seat belts for all ages (PA 21-175)

SUSTAINABILITY & ENVIRONMENT

As a coastal community, we are keenly aware of the impact of climate change and severe weather on our community. This session we:

- Raised bottle deposits to 10 cents beginning in 2024, increased eligible items and provided more money to towns and redemption centers to ensure these products do not end up as litter or in a landfill (PA 21-58)
- Empowered towns with improved options for managing storm water and planning for climate resilience at the local level (PA 21-115)
- Regulated the harmful chemical "PFAS" (PA 21-191)
- Passed the Long Island Sound "Blue Plan" a guide for future uses of the Sound (HJ 53)
- Expanded requirements and opportunities for farm and municipal participation in anaerobic digestion of organic material (PA 21-16)

