



JOURNAL OF THE SENATE

Wednesday, February 10, 2021

The Office of the Senate Clerk's under the authority of the President Pro Tempore and the Senate Republican Leader in accordance with the provisions of Senate Rule 9(A).

It is hereby moved that Senate Agenda Number 1, dated February 10, 2021, is adopted, the items on said Agenda shall be acted upon as indicated and that the Agenda shall be incorporated into the Senate Journal and Senate Transcript.

REPORTS

The following reports were received, read by the Clerk and referred to the Committees indicated:

Report – State Department of Labor – The Jobs First Employment Services Annual Report for July 2019 – June 2020. (Pursuant to Section 17b-688i(c) of the Connecticut General Statutes.) Date received: February 9, 2021.

Referred to the Committee on Labor and Public Employees

Report – Department of Corrections – Small and Minority Business Set-Aside Program Goals for Fiscal Year 2019-2020. (Pursuant to Section 4a-60g of the Connecticut General Assembly) Date received: October 20, 2020.

Referred to Committees on Government Administration and Elections and Planning and Development

Report – Connecticut Innovations – CT Next Statewide 2021 Annual Marketing Plan. (Pursuant to Section 32-39g(b)(6) of the Connecticut General Statutes) Date received: February 9, 2021.

Referred to Committees on Commerce and Finance, Revenue and Bonding.

Report – Department of Motor Vehicles – Connecticut Emissions Program Statistics for January 2021. (Pursuant to Executive Directive #3 and Section 14-164h of the Connecticut General Statutes) Date received: February 9, 2021.

Referred to Committee on Transportation

Report, Chief State's Attorney Richard J. Colangelo, - Preliminary Status Report of The Use of Force in Stratford CT on Friday February 5, 2021. (Pursuant to Public Act 19-90 sec. 3) Date received: February 10, 2021.

Referred to Committee on Judiciary

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS
SENATE AND HOUSE BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS**

In accordance with the provisions of Senate Rule 9(d), the first reading of the following bills and resolutions was waived, the list of bills and resolutions as prepared by the Clerks was accepted, and the bills and resolutions referred to the Committees as indicated thereon in concurrence:

HUMAN SERVICES

S.B. No. **853** (RAISED) HUMAN SERVICES. 'AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE-WIDE HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE BOARD OF DIRECTORS', to add the Commissioner of Social Services, or the commissioner's designee, to the State-Wide Health Information Exchange Board of Directors.

S.B. No. **854** (RAISED) HUMAN SERVICES. 'AN ACT CONCERNING A LIST OF THE 100 MOST DELINQUENT CHILD SUPPORT OBLIGORS', to eliminate a requirement that a list of delinquent child support obligors be published.

ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY

S.B. No. **855** (RAISED) ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY. 'AN ACT CONCERNING THE DECOUPLING OF THE PUBLIC UTILITIES REGULATORY AUTHORITY AND THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION', to decouple the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

S.B. No. **856** (RAISED) ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY. 'AN ACT INCREASING REPRESENTATION ON THE ENERGY CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT BOARD', to increase representation on the energy conservation management board, including low-income residential customers and municipalities.

S.B. No. **857** (RAISED) ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY. 'AN ACT CONCERNING EMERGENCY BACKUP POWER FOR CELL TOWERS', to require a telecommunications company to provide backup power for free-standing telecommunications towers or antennas.

S.B. No. **858** (RAISED) ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY. 'AN ACT CONCERNING CALL BEFORE YOU DIG PROGRAM VIOLATIONS AND CERTAIN MODIFICATIONS TO GAS PIPELINES PROCESSES', to require that civil penalties for the failure of a public utility to properly or timely mark the approximate location of an underground facility be paid by the person, public agency or public utility to whom the notice of failure to comply is addressed; and to modify existing gas pipeline processes.

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

S.B. No. **859** (RAISED) VETERANS' AFFAIRS. 'AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN DEPOSITS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS' INSTITUTIONAL GENERAL WELFARE FUND', to require the deposit of reimbursements from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs for pharmaceutical purchases into the institutional general welfare fund.

S.B. No. **860** (RAISED) VETERANS' AFFAIRS. 'AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF MEDICAID, MEDICARE AND TRICARE FUNDS TO PROVIDE CERTAIN VETERANS WITH TRANSPORTATION TO MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS', to provide veterans who do not

have access to transportation with transportation services to and from medical appointments and hospital visits.

S.B. No. **861** (RAISED) VETERANS' AFFAIRS. 'AN ACT WAIVING CERTAIN MEDICAL MARIJUANA FEES FOR VETERANS', to exempt veterans from the registration and administration fees for medical marijuana.

ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY

S.B. No. **862** (RAISED) ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY. 'AN ACT LIMITING ELIGIBILITY FOR THE RESIDENTIAL SOLAR INVESTMENT PROGRAM AND PREVENTING DISTRIBUTED ENERGY GENERATION SOLICITATIONS FROM SEGREGATING LARGE PROJECTS', to limit eligibility for the Residential Solar Investment Program, and to prevent renewable energy solicitations from segregating a large project into smaller projects.

S.B. No. **863** (RAISED) ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY. 'AN ACT CONCERNING ENERGY EFFICIENCY STANDARDS', to establish and update state appliance and equipment energy and water efficiency standards.

S.B. No. **864** (RAISED) ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY. 'AN ACT CONCERNING THE VALUATION OF CERTAIN PROPERTIES FOR MUNICIPAL PURCHASE', to provide a value for the municipal purchase of substations and utility poles.

S.B. No. **865** (RAISED) ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY. 'AN ACT REQUIRING THE STUDY OF ENERGY SOURCES', to require the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection to conduct a study to determine whether policy and procedural changes within the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection may increase the effectiveness of energy sources utilized by the state.

TRANSPORTATION

S.B. No. **866** (RAISED) TRANSPORTATION. 'AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONNECTICUT PORT AUTHORITY', to require the annual report submitted by the board of directors of the Connecticut Port Authority to include a summary of the authority's activities and recommendations for legislation to promote the authority's purpose.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

S.B. No. **867** (RAISED) PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT. 'AN ACT CONCERNING INVESTMENT OF CERTAIN MUNICIPAL FUNDS', to allow for the investment of funds held in certain trusts established by municipalities, or in which municipalities may participate, to be invested in trust funds administered, held or invested by the Treasurer.

S.B. No. **868** (RAISED) PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT. 'AN ACT CONCERNING REGULATION OF COMMUNITY RESIDENCES', to distinguish certain facilities from community residences for the purposes of certain zoning statutes.

S.B. No. **869** (RAISED) PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT. 'AN ACT CONCERNING COMMUNITY INVESTMENT BOARDS AND NEIGHBORHOOD ASSISTANCE', to (1) require certain municipalities to establish community investment boards to identify priorities for the use of municipal revenue sharing grants and select grants for payment in lieu of taxes, (2) require the Office of Policy and Management to accept proposals for solutions to problems specific to urban areas and establish pilot programs to implement such proposals, and (3) establish a task force to study issues concerning nonprofit providers.

S.B. No. **870** (RAISED) PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT. 'AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT', to implement the recommendations of the Office of Policy and Management concerning property tax exemptions, special taxing districts, neglected cemeteries, revaluation of real property, property tax assessment and appeals, regional services grants, tax overpayment refunds, tax collection and the elimination of municipal requirements relating to fiscal disparities.

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN

S.B. No. **871** (RAISED) COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN. 'AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE OFFICE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OMBUDSMAN', to establish the Office of the Department of Children and Families Ombudsman within the Office of Governmental Accountability.

S.B. No. **872** (RAISED) COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN. 'AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REVISIONS TO THE STATUTES CONCERNING CHILDREN', to make minor revisions to the statutes of the Department of Children and Families, to consolidate the reporting requirements of the department and to add a member to the State Advisory Council on Children and Families.

FINANCE, REVENUE AND BONDING

S.B. No. **873** (RAISED) FINANCE, REVENUE AND BONDING. 'AN ACT MITIGATING ADVERSE TAX CONSEQUENCES RESULTING FROM EMPLOYEES WORKING REMOTELY DURING COVID-19, AND CONCERNING THE REMOVAL OF LIENS ON THE PROPERTY OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE BENEFICIARIES AND A THREE-TIERED GRANTS IN LIEU OF TAXES PROGRAM', to (1) mitigate adverse tax consequences resulting from employees working remotely during the taxable year 2020 due to COVID-19, (2) eliminate state recovery of public assistance payments from certain assets and estates, and (3) revise the calculation of the amounts of grants in lieu of taxes paid to municipalities, based on equalized net grand list per capita.

COMMERCE

H.B. No. **5761** (COMM) COMMERCE. 'AN ACT ESTABLISHING A REGULATORY SANDBOX PROGRAM', to establish a regulatory sandbox program, which allows a person to temporarily test an innovative product or service on a limited basis without otherwise being licensed or authorized to act by the laws of this state.

ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY

H.B. No. **6409** (RAISED) ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY. 'AN ACT CONCERNING THE SOLICITATION OF BIOGAS INJECTION PROPOSALS FROM ANAEROBIC DIGESTION FACILITIES', to solicit proposals from anaerobic digestion facilities that produce biogas for injection into the natural gas distribution system in the state.

H.B. No. **6410** (RAISED) ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY. 'AN ACT INCREASING THE PENALTY FOR VIOLATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE NO SALES SOLICITATION CALLS LISTING', to increase the penalty applicable to telephone solicitors for violations associated with the no sales solicitation calls listing.

H.B. No. **6411** (RAISED) ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY. 'AN ACT MOVING THE OFFICE OF CONSUMER COUNSEL WITHIN THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL', to relocate the Office of Consumer Counsel within the office of the Attorney General.

H.B. No. **6412** (RAISED) ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY. 'AN ACT CONCERNING A LOW-CARBON FUEL BLEND OF HEATING OIL AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A BIOHEAT ADVISORY BOARD', to require a low-carbon fuel blend of heating oil in the state and to establish a Bioheat Advisory Board.

H.B. No. **6413** (RAISED) ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY. 'AN ACT REQUIRING A STUDY OF A MUNICIPAL ENERGY SECURITY AUTHORITY', to require the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection to study whether to recognize a Municipal Energy Security Authority in the state.

H.B. No. **6414** (RAISED) ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY. 'AN ACT REQUIRING THE STUDY OF THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE STATE', to require the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection to conduct a study to determine whether policy and procedural changes within the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection may increase the effectiveness of the use of technology in the state.

H.B. No. **6415** (RAISED) ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY. 'AN ACT REQUIRING THE PUBLIC UTILITIES REGULATORY AUTHORITY TO ADOPT REGULATIONS FOR NATURAL BARRIER PRESERVATION AND MAINTENANCE BY ELECTRIC DISTRIBUTION COMPANIES', to require the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority to adopt regulations ensuring electric distribution companies preserve and maintain existing natural barriers.

HUMAN SERVICES

H.B. No. **6416** (RAISED) HUMAN SERVICES. 'AN ACT CONCERNING THE REMOVAL OF LIENS ON THE PROPERTY OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE BENEFICIARIES', to eliminate state recovery of public assistance payments from assets and estates valued at two hundred fifty thousand dollars or less except as required under federal law.

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN

H.B. No. **6417** (RAISED) COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN. 'AN ACT REQUIRING BACKGROUND CHECKS FOR CERTAIN EMPLOYEES OF YOUTH CAMPS', to require youth camp employees who are eighteen years of age or older to submit to a comprehensive background check.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

H.B. No. **6418** (RAISED) PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT. 'AN ACT CONCERNING ABANDONED AND BLIGHTED PROPERTY RECEIVERSHIP', to remove the municipal population threshold for certain parties to petition the Superior Court for appointment of a receiver for a blighted and abandoned property.

H.B. No. **6419** (RAISED) PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT. 'AN ACT CONCERNING VOTING REQUIREMENTS FOR ESTABLISHING A DISTRICT TO MAINTAIN WATER QUALITY IN A LAKE OR LAKES', to allow a simple majority of voters to approve the creation of a special taxing district to maintain water quality in a lake.

H.B. No. **6420** (RAISED) PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT. 'AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION FOR CERTAIN MUNICIPAL VOLUNTEERS', to increase the property tax exemption for certain municipal volunteers from one thousand dollars to two thousand dollars.

H.B. No. **6421** (RAISED) PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT. 'AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONTINUATION OF RETIREMENT ALLOWANCES FOR CERTAIN RETIREES

UPON SUBSEQUENT EMPLOYMENT BY A BOARD OF EDUCATION', to permit retired public safety personnel to receive retirement allowances, but not credit in a municipal pension system, if such personnel are employed by a local or regional board of education in a public safety capacity after retirement.

H.B. No. **6422** (RAISED) PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT. 'AN ACT REQUIRING A STUDY OF THE OBSTACLES TO MERGING OR CONSOLIDATING MUNICIPAL FIRE DISTRICTS AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS', to require the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management to conduct a study regarding the obstacles to merging or consolidating the fire districts or fire departments of two or more municipalities.

PUBLIC HEALTH

H.B. No. **6423** (RAISED) PUBLIC HEALTH. 'AN ACT CONCERNING IMMUNIZATIONS', to protect the public health by ensuring adequate and appropriate immunizations of children.

H.B. No. **6424** (RAISED) PUBLIC HEALTH. 'AN ACT REVISING DATA COLLECTION REQUIREMENTS FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS CONNECTING TO THE STATE-WIDE HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE', to clarify and standardize race, ethnicity and language data collection for health care providers required to connect to the State-wide Health Information Exchange.

H.B. No. **6425** (RAISED) PUBLIC HEALTH. 'AN ACT CONCERNING AID IN DYING FOR TERMINALLY ILL PATIENTS', to provide aid in dying to terminally ill patients.

TRANSPORTATION

H.B. No. **6426** (RAISED) TRANSPORTATION. 'AN ACT CONCERNING RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE CONNECTICUT AIRPORT AUTHORITY REGARDING THE PROVISION OF SECURITY SERVICES AND METEOROLOGICAL EVALUATION TOWERS', to (1) require the Connecticut Airport Authority and the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection to enter into a contract for security services at Bradley International Airport, and (2) establish safety standards for meteorological evaluation towers.

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

H.B. No. **6427** (RAISED) VETERANS' AFFAIRS. 'AN ACT CONCERNING THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND BYLAWS OF THE MILITIA UNITS', to require the Governor to determine the structure of the militia units and authorize the Adjutant General to issue bylaws, regulations, orders and circulars for the militia.

H.B. No. **6428** (RAISED) VETERANS' AFFAIRS. 'AN ACT ESTABLISHING A LAW ENFORCEMENT SUPPORT OFFICE PROGRAM ACCOUNT', to establish a law enforcement support office program account.

H.B. No. **6429** (RAISED) VETERANS' AFFAIRS. 'AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE EXPANSION OF PROPERTY TAX RELIEF FOR CERTAIN VETERANS', to establish a task force to study the feasibility of expanding property tax relief for certain veterans, and the fiscal impact on municipalities of any such expanded tax relief.

HOUSING

H.B. No. **6430** (RAISED) HOUSING. 'AN ACT CONCERNING HOUSING AUTHORITY JURISDICTION', to allow a housing authority to expand its jurisdiction to include certain high and very high opportunity areas, as determined by the Department of Housing.

H.B. No. **6431** (RAISED) HOUSING. 'AN ACT CONCERNING HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR JUSTICE-IMPACTED PERSONS', to prohibit housing providers from considering a prospective tenant's criminal conviction after certain time periods.

H.B. No. **6432** (RAISED) HOUSING. 'AN ACT CONCERNING HOUSING AUTHORITY APPLICATION PROCEDURES', to simplify the application process for assisted housing.

H.B. No. **6433** (RAISED) HOUSING. 'AN ACT CONCERNING INSPECTIONS OF RENTAL PROPERTY PRIOR TO OCCUPANCY OR TERMINATION, LATE RENTAL PAYMENTS AND DESIGNATION OF A RENTAL HOUSING OMBUDSMAN', to permit tenants to request an inspection of rental property prior to occupancy and after notice of termination of a tenancy, to cap late fees for rental payments and to create a Rental Housing Ombudsman within the Department of Housing.

COMMERCE

H.B. No. **6434** (RAISED) COMMERCE. 'AN ACT CONCERNING MANUFACTURER NEEDS IN THE STATE', to require the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development to study the needs of manufacturers in the state.

H.B. No. **6435** (RAISED) COMMERCE. 'AN ACT EXTENDING THE MANUFACTURING APPRENTICESHIP TAX CREDIT TO PASS-THROUGH ENTITIES', to allow pass-through entities to claim the manufacturing apprenticeship tax credit against the personal income tax or the affected business entity tax.

HOUSING

H.B. No. **6436** (RAISED) HOUSING. 'AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE OPEN CHOICE VOUCHERS PILOT PROGRAM', to establish a pilot program to enable certain families participating in the interdistrict public school attendance program to move to the town where their children attend school.

H.B. No. **6437** (RAISED) HOUSING. 'AN ACT REQUIRING LANDLORDS TO NOTIFY TENANTS OF FORECLOSURE PROCEEDINGS', to require landlords to notify prospective and current tenants of foreclosure proceedings and to permit tenants to seek court appointment of a receiver upon receiving such notice.

BUSINESS FROM THE HOUSE CHANGE OF REFERENCE HOUSE BILL

The following report on the House Bill, recommending a change of reference was received from the committee indicated, the report of the committee accepted, and the bill referred as recommended:

FINANCE, REVENUE AND BONDING. Proposed H.B. No. 6173 AN ACT CONCERNING QUALIFYING INCOME THRESHOLDS FOR STATE SERVICES AND BENEFITS AND THE CLIFF EFFECT.

The bill was then referred to the Committee on Human Services.

**BUDGET ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY
GOVERNOR NED LAMONT
FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022-2023 BIENNIAL BUDGET
DELIVERED VIA VIDEO
FEBRUARY 10, 2021**

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Senator Kelly, Representative Candelora, members of the General Assembly, Lt. Governor Bysiewicz and the people of the great State of Connecticut.

As your governor, one of my top priorities has been to get Connecticut's fiscal house in order. My first stop two years ago was the state's budget. For decades, Connecticut was defined by one fiscal crisis after another. Which is why when I spoke to you at my first budget address, I challenged us to pass an honestly balanced budget on time.

The budget we passed together, on a spring day rather than in the middle of an autumn night, resulted in a small surplus in year one and, so far so good, a bigger surplus in year two.

We did so without broad-based tax increases, without cuts to public services or cuts to our cities and towns, and we did so while building the largest budget reserve in our state's history.

Despite a global pandemic which threatens every aspect of our society and economy, we stayed the course, weathering the storm and our state has begun to find its economic footing.

True enough, our original path to solvency had some twists and turns thrown in, but we got to our final destination, and the rest of the country has taken notice. Yep, there's more work to do, but Connecticut has made significant progress in getting its fiscal house in order.

Our budget is much more than a list of expenditures and revenues. Rather, it is a reflection of our shared values, as we are collectively deciding not only what we are funding, but why we are funding it. It is a document that defines who we are as a state and a society. Inevitably, there will be tradeoffs, just like the many families across this state do with their own budgets. And just as those same families are managing and struggling through the economic implications of a global pandemic, so are we.

COVID-19 continues to throw wild cards into the deck, but the federal government is getting much closer in deciding how it will support our state and local municipalities. Connecticut will have to remain agile in meeting these changing circumstances, but that being said, I would not change our hand with any other state in the country.

Due in large part to the steps we have taken to mitigate the spread of the virus and manage our state's finances, Connecticut is one of the best positioned states in the country. Thanks to the good people of this great state who took the public health precautions seriously, we have been able to keep more of our economy open safely with a lower infection rate than almost any other state.

The pandemic reminds us that this is no time to limit our ambitions. Rather, the pandemic drew into sharp focus our racial health disparities and educational inequalities, as well as the fragility of our families and small businesses where women, and especially women of color, took the biggest hit during this pandemic.

They were usually the first ones on the front lines taking care of our children, our parents, our sick, or just trying to keep their business going to keep employees paid and their families fed.

We owe them more than just our gratitude, and their faces are reflected in our budget.

But let's face it, the Connecticut budget is still burdened with high fixed costs accumulated over the decades, and these costs plus a COVID economy result in deficit projections in each of the next two years.

With our continuing success in streamlining government, we have reduced projected deficits to less than \$1 billion annually, which will be balanced by either:

1. a gradually growing economy;
2. state and local aid from Washington; or
3. a partial drawdown from our \$3.5 billion rainy day fund.

These realities, however, must not come at the cost of our core Connecticut values. Therefore, the budget I am submitting is anchored in five priorities:

1. Defeating COVID-19: Because if we don't, nothing else matters;
2. A More Affordable Connecticut: An intense focus on making Connecticut more affordable for our middle class through investments in education, early childhood care, support for our small businesses, workforce development, and more affordable healthcare;
3. Investing in Our Future: With a 21st century upgrade to our transportation, energy, and broadband infrastructures;
4. Modernizing State Government: Creating an improved customer experience and faster service at less cost to our taxpayers; and
5. Economic Growth and an Economy That Works for All.

And, as we accomplished two years ago, my budget achieves this without broad-based tax increases, reducing municipal aid, or cutting any existing services. These are commitments I will not break.

Defeating COVID-19

As I have said, defeating COVID-19 is the top priority. We were also able to support the additional demand on our social services, allocating funding for nonprofit providers and nursing homes to provide stability and needed resources.

And we will continue to build on our \$500 million investment in a robust testing program and continue to ramp up our COVID-19 vaccination program, both of which have been rated as among the best in the country.

The past year has been an exceptional challenge to our cities and towns. There isn't a single mayor who in 2019 budgeted for a pandemic in 2020, and they are struggling to build this new reality into an already tight budget for 2021 and beyond.

In addition to facing increased public health and safety costs, our most distressed municipalities are also facing diminished tax bases due to tax exempt properties, and we will help them shoulder some of this burden next year by allocating an additional \$100 million to 25 distressed cities and towns, on top of the projected federal support for our local municipalities. Our budget also includes an increase in PILOT funding – payment in lieu of taxes – funding in the out years with 50 percent coming from our cannabis revenues to further support our cities and towns.

A More Affordable Connecticut

Our starting point for strengthening our middle class. For me, that is education.

We need to be doing everything we can to help our kids, many of whom have not been in the classroom for many months. With strong federal support in excess of \$400 million, our budget provides all the resources our schools need to let our kids stay in school safely.

With many of our urban schools crowded and their suburban schools with extra capacity, my budget proposes an expansion of the open choice program, beginning in Norwalk and Danbury, so these kids and those in surrounding communities can go to school in a more diverse environment with greater opportunity.

And as promised two years ago, Connecticut has implemented a teacher recruitment program with an emphasis on hiring more teachers of color, which is now approaching 10 percent statewide. We still have a long way to go.

In 2021, education doesn't stop when a student graduates from high school. And I am sending the legislature a bill that will increase postsecondary enrollment and success, particularly for first-generation, low-income, and minority students. It ensures the students complete the student aid applications that will bring millions of additional federal dollars to our residents and educational institutions.

It also streamlines the admissions process at our state universities to ensure the students in every district get connected to high-quality state higher ed programs.

Building on our best-of-class state university system, the new federal Higher Ed Relief Fund will provide \$140 million for public higher education, which covers higher COVID-related costs and support for Connecticut students who are having a difficult time affording their education during these tough economic times.

And we will continue to maintain our commitment to the educational cost sharing formula, with additional monies provided by federal resources, so every kid gets the best opportunity at the starting line of life, regardless of zip code.

The additional education funding also will allow our towns and cities to hold the line on property tax increases, doing more to keep Connecticut affordable for you.

And speaking of that starting line, my budget continues my commitment to high-quality early childcare and education.

In order to ensure that Connecticut emerges from the pandemic with a stable, nation-leading system of early childhood education, we put our money where our mouths are and invested over \$125 million in state, federal and philanthropic funds over the last year alone. And state subsidies for childcare hold down the costs for our working families, allowing them to get back to work.

Supporting Small Businesses

One of the many lessons reinforced by this pandemic: the importance of our small businesses – not only to the economy, but to our communities. Small businesses are so much more than places of employment, they are the bedrock on which our towns, cities, and neighborhoods are built.

So, we used our state resources to do everything we could to keep our small businesses afloat during the pandemic until the federal Paycheck Protection Program could kick in, not once but twice, with the hope that this time the vaccine will make the recovery more permanent. Our

service sector, especially restaurants and bars, airlines and hospitality, they've been hard hit, which drives up unemployment and reduces tax revenues to the state.

For this reason, in addition to the Paycheck Protection Program, over 10,000 of our businesses were the recipients of \$85 million in small business grants. This support provided a small shot in the arm to help our small businesses keep their doors open.

This past summer, I announced the creation of Business.CT.gov, an online one-stop-shop where entrepreneurs can easily find information and complete everything required to start up and manage their businesses here in Connecticut. More than 44,000 new businesses were registered in the state last year – one of our best years ever.

Workforce Development

Last fall, I announced the formation of the Office of Workforce Strategy, with a dedicated focus on the current and future workforce needs of the economy.

As a state, we need to educate and train our workforce for these future opportunities.

My proposed budget, and supporting legislation, reflects the continued commitment.

Kelli Vallieres, Connecticut's first Chief Workforce Officer, will serve as my principal advisor on workforce policy and strategy.

Kelli and I will be working with our community colleges and the Connecticut State Colleges & Universities system to build on our certificate programs to provide the skill set for jobs which are in high demand for skilled workers, such as advanced manufacturing, coding, construction, nursing, digital media. The certificate program provides you with a path to a job at less cost in less time than a traditional degree.

A high-quality workforce development program will ensure better outcomes for our state's residents and help our businesses to hire from and continue to grow here in the state.

This is all the more necessary and urgent given how many of our residents have suffered from unemployment due to the COVID pandemic.

Investing in Our Future

We do not need COVID to remind us of the need for access to fast and reliable internet in Connecticut.

President Joe Biden celebrated Connecticut for expanding access to education through the distribution of tens of thousands of devices and hotspots to bridge the digital divide for our school children.

Our state was an early adopter of telehealth, allowing patients and providers the ability to access their doctors from the safety of their homes.

We also embraced telecommuting both across the private sector and state government.

And what do they all have in common? The need for accessible, reliable, and high-speed internet.

I am reminded of the saying, "If you build it, they will come." When it comes to broadband, "If you don't build it, they won't have a chance."

I am sending a bill to the legislature to provide expanded broadband access for those communities large and small which have been left behind in the digital revolution.

Look, we're by no means certain how pandemics are accelerated by changes to our environment. Our environmental efforts continue to be viewed through the lens of public health, new green-jobs and environmental justice, which means reducing our dependence on out-of-date energy solutions, such as coal and antiquated trash-to-energy plants, which are spewing pollution particulates into the air. This airborne pollution hits our urban communities the hardest, creating those same comorbidities which make you much more susceptible to disease and infections, like asthma and COVID-19.

As for our transportation infrastructure and funding, if the thinking had been, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," then that thinking needs to change.

This is personal. Annie and I went over the Mianus River Bridge down in Greenwich a few hours before it collapsed a generation ago. So I know.

The Special Transportation Fund is broken and it needs to be fixed.

This comes at the very time the federal government is ready to provide significant funding to streamline transportation systems, but only if our state can pay its share.

The current state of our transportation fund keeps us from accessing these federal funds and risks our ability to fund infrastructure projects we desperately need to revitalize our economy.

So, I will propose two new sources of revenue that, combined, sustainably fund investments in Connecticut's transportation future:

1. Connecticut can join the multi-state Transportation Climate Initiative, along with neighboring states like Rhode Island and Massachusetts, which will reduce carbon emissions while raising over \$80 million for climate change and public transit investment throughout our state; and
2. Connecticut can implement the tractor trailer mileage-based fee, which is already in place in New York and Oregon. The mileage fee would raise \$90 million annually and apply only to those larger heavy-weight trucks, which can cause the vast majority of the damage to our highways. Mayor Pete, our new transportation secretary, as well as top Republicans in Washington, support this approach to funding transportation investments. And this funding allows Connecticut to leverage for \$1 billion worth of projects over the next five years.

With these two alternatives, we can maintain our project schedule to keep or bring our roads and bridges up to a state of good repair and speed up your commute.

Making Healthcare More Affordable

COVID-19 reminds us that healthcare is a human right and that we all have a stake in keeping our neighbors healthy.

Healthcare savings continue to be a big driver in our effort to balance the budget without tax increases and make healthcare more affordable and accessible across the state.

For our state employees and retirees, our push for more competitive pricing represents \$89 million in savings in the current budget and \$186 million in savings in the next biennium.

This budget reduces the rate of growth in healthcare cost of active and retired state workers, driving down our fixed costs and saving taxpayer dollars.

Healthcare savings are also important to family budgets across Connecticut.

Last September, working on behalf of those families, my administration reduced rate increases for 2021 and saved 200,000 residents nearly \$100 million in health insurance costs.

We need to do more to rein in costs. So, working in concert with Massachusetts, my affordable care package will limit price increases on pharmaceuticals and our premium support leveraged with significant federal dollars will lower costs for all of our families and small businesses.

Finally, we need to promote private sector innovation to make healthcare more accessible and affordable. Connecticut's insurance industry is rolling out new products that will save small businesses and young families money through smart plan design and 21st century personal technology starting this year.

Two years ago, we repaired our frayed relationship with our hospitals and the state immediately partnered with them in managing the pandemic, making sure that nobody was denied COVID-19 treatment.

Testing was made available at no cost to all of our diverse communities, helping Connecticut provide more testing per capita than almost any other state in the country.

And today, we are using that same testing model to make COVID-19 vaccinations widely available at hospitals and clinics, stadiums, as well as bringing the vaccine to our hardest hit communities.

Modernizing State Government

Improving our infrastructure is more than expanded broadband and streamlining transportation. And my administration worked throughout the pandemic with all of our agencies to ensure that they held the line on spending and planned for more efficiencies.

We will continue to upgrade our outdated IT systems across state government, fulfilling my commitment of getting residents out of line and instead online to do business with the state. This also enables our state employees and agencies to provide better service for our taxpayers at less cost.

For example, the Department of Motor Vehicles can now handle more services online, such as driver's license renewals.

And at our Department of Consumer Protection, we successfully moved 245 operational licenses online, representing about 80 percent of all state license renewals.

Additionally, our continued focus on driving efficiencies and savings across 25 state agencies and departments has resulted in the successful consolidation of HR, personnel, and technology platforms so our state government can work together as one, rather than 25 different fiefdoms.

One of the many lessons learned over the last year was one taught to both the public and private sectors – large-scale office space may be a thing of the past. While we're already moving in this direction, we have sped up the process of reducing the real estate footprint of the state government, shedding extra capacity no longer needed with a technology-enabled workforce, and returning those properties to the municipal tax rolls. This past year, we successfully sold a large state-owned office building in Hartford and moved out of two others, which will also be sold and returned to the city's tax base.

This helps our municipalities and the state by reducing the state's real estate footprint, returning these buildings to the tax base of the town and cities which host them, and eliminates the costs of operating them. Similarly, the state has excess capacity in prisons and nursing homes which will result in further downsizing.

Economic Growth and an Economy That Work For All

We will also continue to find similar savings by working together with our neighboring states. We went out to bid, for example, for offshore wind power at the same time last year, and that competition resulted in Connecticut securing a long-term power agreement, which was one of the lowest in the country.

And now our neighboring states are offering recreational marijuana on a legal and regulated basis. Massachusetts dispensaries are advertising extensively here in Connecticut. And, rather than surrender this market to out-of-staters, or worse, to the unregulated underground market, our budget provides for the legalization of recreational marijuana.

These additional revenues will go to distressed communities, which have been hardest hit by the war on drugs. Half the tax revenues should be allocated to PILOT payments, in addition to a three percent local excise tax option. And importantly, my proposed legislation authorizes the automated erasure of criminal records for those with marijuana-related drug possession, convictions, and charges.

Our neighboring states are moving forward with sports betting and i-gaming, and Connecticut should not leave these opportunities for other states to benefit from our inaction. My administration has been in active negotiations with our tribal partners to bring the state's gaming economy into the digital age. And I am submitting legislation which reflects what I believe to be the best bet in ending this stalemate of inaction in a way which is in the best interest for the entire state.

Over the last year, we've experienced a real estate boom in Connecticut. With tens of thousands of new residents discovering what they've always known, that Connecticut is a beautiful state with beaches, mountains, and parks all within a short drive from one another, great schools which were more likely to be open and open safely, not to mention expanding job opportunities. In Hartford County alone, this past December saw a 50 percent increase in sold single-family homes compared to the previous December, in a similar trend all across the state and one we must continue to support and encourage. I've always said, we don't need more taxes, we need more taxpayers, and they are already paying dividends as you can see by our balanced budget.

We don't have the luxury of doing one thing at a time. There's too much at stake. While my administration will continue to be laser focus on managing the COVID-19 crisis, we must focus on the light at the end of the tunnel. Every action we take in response to COVID-19 is in the interest of the economy and public health and safety. We must do so knowing exactly how it positions us on our shared path to continued fiscal health and broad-based economic opportunity for all of our citizens.

And lastly, if our budget is a representation of our core values, we must make significant progress towards racial justice and equity; not as a single budget item, rather as a pervasive reach into all our programs and priorities.

At President Biden's inauguration, Amanda Gorman, the nation's first youth poet laureate, eloquently addressed the nation about racial justice. Her inaugural poem, "The Hill We Climb," was a powerful recognition of the pain of our nation's past and the promise of its future. Everything she said moved me, especially this passage:

“We’ve learned that quiet isn’t always peace, and the norms and notions of what is just isn’t always justice.”

We’re the land of steady habits, but that habit must include the never-ending struggle for a more just society.

Throughout my budget, you will find significant focus on investments in education, housing, workforce development, healthcare, criminal justice reform – each intended to help us climb the hill that Amanda Gorman has challenged us to take.

Our charge is bigger than beating back COVID-19. My challenge to you today is exactly what it was two years ago, and we are going to do this together. A budget that’s on time, in time, for our mayors, superintendents, and the 500,000 students who don’t want to waste their shot and make the most of a fresh start – all joining us in Connecticut’s comeback.

Now, let’s get to work.