



The Commission on
Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity

CWCSEO

Connecticut General Assembly

2023 Legislative Session

Advisory Board Summary Report

June 2023

Executive Summary

This document provides an overview on the various aspects of the 2023 legislative session. The outlined policy priorities for the Commission fell under the four main pillars of our enumerated statute regarding the areas of health and safety, educational success, freedom from poverty, and freedom from discrimination.

The document then provides a list of testimony presented from the Commission to the legislature throughout session on the bills that align with our scope and mission.

The bills discussed underneath the four aforementioned categories are summarized conclusions to the bills listed in the Advisory Board reports that were distributed to members throughout session.

Since 2023 was a year in which the legislature revisited and reconstructed the budget, budget highlights are provided as they relate to the four buckets of the Commission's policy priorities.

As the Commission's relationship with the legislature and other state agencies continues to evolve, so does the scope of our involvement in a variety of areas. As a result of legislation passed this year, the Commission has been named to new working groups, task forces, and updates have been made to the Commission's role in its existing purview. The section regarding the expansion of the Commission's mandates and responsibilities describes these changes in further detail.

Finally, the conclusion in this document does not mark a definite end to the strides made in this legislative year, as the work is ever continuing. Instead, the conclusion portion of this report reflects on the work done while simultaneously turning to look at the possibilities and growth ahead.

Legislative Overview

Policy Priorities

Sec. 2-128 of the General Statutes states that the Commission duties include focusing its efforts on the following quality of life desired results for women, children and their families, seniors, and members of the African American, Asian American Pacific Islander and Latino and Puerto Rican populations of the state:

"That all such persons are (A) healthy, safe and achieve educational success; (B) free from poverty; and (C) free from discrimination."

This legislative session, the Commission used these four pillars as guideposts to drive the work around identifying and navigating intersectional policy priorities.

Testimony

In alignment with our mission to inform and engage all policy makers about constituent needs for women, children and their families, seniors, and the African American, Asian American Pacific Islander, and Latino and Puerto Rican populations in Connecticut through a nonpartisan, data-driven lens, the Commission presented both verbal and written public hearing testimony to an array of legislative committees throughout session.

I. Aging Committee

- H.B. No. 5779 AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF CRIMINAL PENALTIES FOR ABUSE, ABANDONMENT AND FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION OF ELDERLY PERSONS, PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES OR CONSERVED PERSONS - [Public Hearing Verbal Testimony](#)
- H.B. No. 5781 AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF THE NEEDS OF SENIOR CITIZENS - [Public Hearing Verbal Testimony](#)
- H.B. No. 6576 AN ACT STRENGTHENING SUPPORT FOR GRANDPARENTS AND OTHER NONPARENT RELATIVES RAISING CHILDREN - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#) / [Public Hearing Verbal Testimony](#) (52:45)
- H.B. No. 6677 AN ACT CONCERNING ADULT DAY CENTERS - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#) / [Public Hearing Verbal Testimony](#) (52:45)
- H.B. No. 6679 AN ACT CONCERNING AGING PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)

- S.B. No. 902 AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FAMILY COUNCILS IN MANAGED RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES PROVIDING ASSISTED LIVING SERVICES - [Public Hearing Verbal Testimony](#)
- S.B. No. 931 AN ACT EXPANDING ACCESS TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE RESPITE CARE PROGRAM - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- S.B. No. 1024 AN ACT CONCERNING A DEMENTIA SERVICES COORDINATOR - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- S.B. No. 1025 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HOMEMAKER-COMPANION AGENCY TASKFORCE - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- S.B. No. 1026 AN ACT CONCERNING NURSING HOME STAFFING RATIOS - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)

II. Committee on Children

- H.B. No. 5194 AN ACT REQUIRING A STUDY OF COMMUNITY-BASED BEREAVEMENT AND GRIEF COUNSELING ORGANIZATIONS AND SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- S.B. No. 2 AN ACT CONCERNING THE MENTAL, PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLNESS OF CHILDREN - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- S.B. No. 929 AN ACT EXPANDING SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS TO PROVIDE FREE SCHOOL MEALS TO ALL STUDENTS - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)

III. Education Committee

- H.B. No. 6759 AN ACT CONCERNING EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- H.B. No. 6760 AN ACT CONCERNING CIVICS EDUCATION AND MEDIA LITERACY - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- H.B. No. 6879 AN ACT CONCERNING TEACHER CERTIFICATION - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- H.B. No. 6880 AN ACT CONCERNING ASSORTED REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- H.B. No. 6881 AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES RELATED TO EDUCATOR COMPENSATION AND PARAEDUCATORS - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- H.B. No. 6882 AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION MANDATE RELIEF AND OTHER TECHNICAL AND ASSORTED REVISIONS AND ADDITIONS TO THE EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION STATUTES - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- H.B. No. 6883 AN ACT CONCERNING STUDENTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- H.B. No. 6884 AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#) / [Public Hearing Verbal Testimony](#) (4:59:05)
- S.B. No. 1 AN ACT CONCERNING TRANSPARENCY IN EDUCATION - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)

- S.B. No. 1093 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE POLICY AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE CONCERNING EDUCATION - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
 - S.B. No. 1165 AN ACT CONCERNING FINANCIAL LITERACY INSTRUCTION - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#) / [Public Hearing Verbal Testimony](#) (2:48:05)
 - S.B. No. 1166 AN ACT CONCERNING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONNECTICUT SCHOOL CLIMATE POLICY - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#) / [Public Hearing Verbal Testimony](#) (2:48:05)
 - S.B. No. 1197 AN ACT CONCERNING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
 - S.B. No. 1198 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCHOOL INDOOR AIR QUALITY WORKING GROUP - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
 - S.B. No. 1199 AN ACT CONCERNING EQUITY IN EDUCATION - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
 - S.B. No. 1200 AN ACT CONCERNING SPECIAL EDUCATION - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- IV. Environment Committee
- H.J. No. 37 RESOLUTION PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO THE STATE CONSTITUTION TO PROVIDE FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- V. General Law Committee
- S.B. No. 1103 AN ACT CONCERNING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, AUTOMATED DECISION-MAKING AND PERSONAL DATA PRIVACY - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#) / [Public Hearing Verbal Testimony](#) (2:48:05)
- VI. Government Administration & Elections Committee
- H.B. No. 5004 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING EARLY VOTING - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
 - H.B. No. 5702 AN ACT ALLOWING INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS TO VOTE - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
 - H.B. No. 5714 AN ACT CONCERNING INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS AND VOTING - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
 - S.B. No. 1057 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND EARLY VOTING - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
 - S.B. No. 1064 AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY VOTING - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
 - H.J. No. 1 RESOLUTION PROPOSING A STATE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ALLOWING FOR NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- VII. Governor's Bills
- H.B. No. 6659 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNium ENDING JUNE 30, 2025, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- VIII. Housing Committee

- S.B. No. 4 AN ACT CONCERNING CONNECTICUT'S PRESENT AND FUTURE HOUSING NEEDS - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- S.B. No. 906 AN ACT CONCERNING HOUSING PROTECTIONS FOR VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- S.B. No. 909 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A RIGHT TO HOUSING - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)

IX. Human Services Committee

- H.B. No. 5321 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A STATE OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE COVERAGE - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#) / [Public Hearing Verbal Testimony](#) (54:55)
- H.B. No. 5765 AN ACT CONCERNING COMPENSATION OF FAMILY CAREGIVERS IN MEDICAID WAIVER PROGRAMS ADMINISTERED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#) / [Public Hearing Verbal Testimony](#) (54:55)
- H.B. No. 6517 AN ACT PROVIDING MEDICAID COVERAGE FOR CERTIFIED, REGISTERED DIETITIAN-NUTRITIONIST (RDN) SERVICES PROVIDING MEDICAL NUTRITION THERAPY - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- H.B. No. 6629 AN ACT CONCERNING TEMPORARY FAMILY ASSISTANCE - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- H.B. No. 6854 AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE OFFICE OF THE FOOD ACCESS ADVOCATE AND TAX INCENTIVES FOR GROCERY STORES IN FOOD DESERTS - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- H.B. No. 6857 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FOOD AS MEDICINE WORKING GROUP - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- H.B. No. 6616 AN ACT CONCERNING THE EXPANSION OF HUSKY HEALTH BENEFITS TO THOSE INELIGIBLE DUE TO IMMIGRATION STATUS - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#) / [Public Hearing Verbal Testimony](#) (1:47:07)
- S.B. No. 82 AN ACT ELIMINATING INCOME AND ASSET LIMITS FOR THE MED-CONNECT HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM FOR WORKING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- S.B. No. 946 AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONNECTICUT HOME-CARE PROGRAM FOR THE ELDERLY - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#) / [Public Hearing Verbal Testimony](#) (54:55)
- S.B. No. 947 AN ACT INCREASING THE MINIMUM AMOUNT OF RESOURCES A COMMUNITY SPOUSE OF AN INSTITUTIONALIZED MEDICAID RECIPIENT MAY RETAIN - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#) / [Public Hearing Verbal Testimony](#) (54:55)

X. Judiciary Committee

- H.B. No. 6569 AN ACT CONCERNING THE MINIMUM AGE TO BE ELIGIBLE TO MARRY - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- S.B. No. 5 AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE PROTECTIONS AGAINST AND RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- S.B. No. 953 AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEFINITION OF RACIAL PROFILING - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)

- S.B. No. 1071 AN ACT CONCERNING DECEPTIVE OR COERCIVE INTERROGATION TACTICS - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- S.B. No. 1117 AN ACT PROVIDING PROTECTIONS FOR PERSONS WHO HAVE BEEN TRAFFICKED AND ADDITIONAL MEASURES TO PREVENT TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- S.B. No. 1195 AN ACT ESTABLISHING SECONDARY TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)

XI. Labor & Public Employees Committee

- H.B. No. 6859 AN ACT CONCERNING PREDICTABLE SCHEDULING - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- S.B. No. 1177 AN ACT CONCERNING ONE FAIR WAGE - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)
- S.B. No. 1178 AN ACT EXPANDING CONNECTICUT PAID SICK DAYS - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)

XII. Transportation Committee

- S.B. No. 1081 AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF A GLOBAL POSITIONAL SYSTEM ON A SCHOOL BUS AND THE SHORTAGE OF SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS - [Public Hearing Written Testimony](#)

Health

Expanding Healthcare Accessibility

The legislature passed an act concerning resources and support services for persons with an intellectual or developmental disability ([HB 5001](#), PA 23-137). This legislation contains language from another bill regarding aging and persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities ([HB 6679](#)). The resources and support services included in the bill are a Transitional Life Skills College program, an evaluation of intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD) employment assistance programs, a reduction in Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Medicaid waiver program waitlists, redefining IDD and service eligibility, autism Medicaid waiver program expansion, a Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) missing persons clearinghouse that holds information to help law enforcement agencies locate missing persons ages 65 and older or ages 18 and older with a mental impairment, and a local voluntary public safety registration system for people with IDD.

The language and concepts of two bills concerning a cost-benefit analysis of establishing a Husky For All, universal healthcare financing system ([HB 5485](#)) and expanding Husky Health benefits to those ineligible due to immigration status ([HB 6616](#)) were passed as part of the implementer ([HB 6941](#), §§298-300). This provision extends HUSKY benefits to children ages 15 and under – rather than ages 12 and under – who meet program income limits but are ineligible due to immigration status; the language included in this section also calls for the Department of Social Services (DSS) to study extending coverage to anyone ages 25 and younger under similar conditions and applies third party state subrogation rights to medical assistance provided under these provisions.

Support for the Elderly

The governor signed into law an act concerning adult day centers ([HB 6677](#), PA 23-30). This bill makes various changes related to the delivery of and reimbursement for adult day centers: it requires the DSS commissioner to develop a plan to increase eligibility for adult day services under the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders (CHCPE), allows the commissioner to submit a Medicaid state plan amendment to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to cover Program of All-Inclusive Care for Elderly (PACE) services under Medicaid, and eliminates an obsolete provision related to a PACE services pilot program.

A significant bill concerning notice of a proposed involuntary transfer or discharge of a nursing facility resident, family councils in managed residential communities, coordination of a dementia services, nursing home transparency and homemaker-companion agencies was passed by the legislature ([HB 5781](#), PA 23-48). This legislation is a conglomerate of numerous bills pertaining to the various needs of our state's senior population ([SB 902](#), [SB 930](#), [SB 1024](#), [SB 1025](#), and [HB 6678](#)). With the consolidation of these concepts, this bill addresses nursing home transparency and reporting requirements, expands supports for people with dementia, and implements the recommendations set forth by the Homemaker-Companion Agency Task Force.

Domestic Violence, Sexual Harassment, & Trafficking

The legislature passed legislation concerning online privacy, data, and safety protections ([SB 3](#), PA 23-56). This bill sets standards on accessing and sharing consumer health data by certain private entities that do business in Connecticut, requires social media platforms to unpublish a minor's social media account within 15 business days and generally delete the account within 45 days of receiving an authenticated request, establishes a framework and sets requirements for how individuals or entities offering certain online services, products, and features manage and process personal data for minors, requires online dating operators to adopt a policy for handling reports by or between users, and statutorily establishes the Connecticut Internet Crimes Against Children task force (CT ICAC) and requires it to use state and federal funding to execute its enumerated duties.

The legislature passed a bill strengthening protections against and response to domestic violence ([SB 5](#), PA 23-106) by making certain changes to laws on protections for victims of family violence; through this legislation, the Judicial Department's electronic monitoring pilot program for family violence offenders will be expanded, courts will be prohibited from ordering an injured spouse to make temporary or permanent alimony payments to a spouse convicted of certain crimes after the marriage date, and will require the organization administering the legal assistance program for indigent restraining order applicants to submit a report to the Judiciary Committee.

The governor signed into law a bill implementing additional measures to prevent trafficking in persons and expanding the composition of the Trafficking In Persons (TIP) Council ([SB 1117](#), PA 23-20). This bill expands protections for victims of human trafficking by prohibiting motels, hotels, or similar lodging operators that offer sleeping accommodations that are either based on an hourly rate or an occupancy that is for 12 hours or less. Furthermore, this bill also increases

the TIP Council membership to include the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) commissioner (or designee).

Health & Safety

The governor signed into law a bill prohibiting anyone under the age of 18 from being issued a marriage license under any circumstances by removing the stipulation in current law allowing a 16- or 17-year-old to get a marriage license if the probate court approves a petition filed by the minor's parent/guardian ([HB 6569](#), PA 23-44). Emancipated minors are also no longer eligible to marry as a result of this legislation.

The legislature passed a comprehensive piece of legislation addressing gun violence ([HB 6667](#), PA 23-53). This bill makes various changes in the state's gun (firearm) laws. It:

1. generally prohibits anyone from (a) knowingly carrying any firearm with intent to display it and (b) having a ghost gun beginning January 1, 2024
2. generally limits a person to only purchasing three handguns in a 30-day period
3. requires various gun safety measures, including safe storage of all firearms and trigger locks
4. expands the assault weapons ban to include more firearms and provides a process for those who lawfully own these weapons to get a certificate of possession or transfer or sell the weapon
5. establishes reduced penalties for possessing ghost guns and undeclared large capacity magazines (LCM) for violators who are eligible under state and federal law to possess firearms
6. specifies the firearm safety training for gun credentials must be completed two years before applying and requires training courses to include additional training (e.g., safe firearm storage)
7. sets stricter release conditions for serious firearm offenders, including only allowing those with certain prior convictions to be released by posting bond
8. establishes firearm-related crime dockets in certain courts
9. requires a police officer or prosecutor, when aware that someone released on parole or probation is a threat to public safety, to file an emergency petition to take specified steps
10. increases the penalty for a first-time unintentional failure to report the loss or theft of a firearm from an infraction to a class A misdemeanor
11. requires the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) (a) to make a decision on a permit requirement to carry a pistol or revolver (i.e., handgun permit) application if the applicant presents an affidavit that the local authority failed to expressly deny or approve a temporary state permit application after a specified period and (b) civil preparedness plan to include a response plan for a mass shooting event
12. requires law enforcement units to post public notices informing people of various firearm-related rights, including specified information about the permit process, and how to apply for a risk-protection order

The legislature passed an act concerning the Behavioral Health Policy and Planning Committee ([HB 6900](#), PA 23-90). This bill simply changes the name of the existing committee from the Mental Health Policy and Oversight Committee to the aforementioned title and changes the number of its committee members as well as its reporting dates.

Nutritional Health

Language and concepts from both the bill establishing an office of the food access advocate and tax incentives for grocery stores in food deserts ([HB 6854](#)) and the bill implementing the recommendations of the Food As Medicine Working Group ([HB 6857](#)) were passed as part of the implementer ([HB 6941](#), §§157-161). The language in this section creates a food a nutrition policy analyst to help reduce food insecurity and food deserts, and authorizes municipalities to provide real property tax abatements for the next two assessment years to new grocery stores established in food deserts if certain requirements are met.

Educational Success

Student Social Emotional Well-Being

The legislature passed a significant bill concerning the mental, physical, and emotional wellness of children ([SB 2](#), PA 23-101). Among other provisions, this bill:

1. requires individualized family service plans to be translated into and provided in Spanish; requires an eligible child whose primary language is Spanish to receive early intervention services from Spanish-speaking personnel and coordinators; allows the services of Spanish-speaking interpreters or translators to be used under certain circumstances
2. requires employers to permit service workers to use accrued paid sick leave to take a mental health wellness day to attend to their emotional or psychological well-being
3. extends eligibility for paid sick leave to a service worker who is the parent or guardian of a child who is a victim of family violence or sexual assault, provided the worker is not the perpetrator or alleged perpetrator of the violence or assault
4. requires the DSS commissioner to provide Medicaid reimbursement for certain mental health evaluations and services at school-based health centers or public schools, to the extent federal law allows; if necessary, amend the Medicaid state plan to do so; and set the reimbursement at a level to ensure adequate providers for these evaluations and services
5. establishes the Office of the Behavioral Health Advocate to advocate for and assist behavioral and mental health care providers and Behavioral Health Advocate Advisory Committee to review and assess the office's performance
6. expands the duties of the Task Force to Study Children's Needs to include reviewing and analyzing certain programs that received pandemic-related federal funding, making recommendations on which programs should receive a more permanent funding structure and conducting a needs assessment focused on children and individuals who were enrolled in a Connecticut high school and a member of the classes graduating from 2020-2023
7. calls for a study of community-based bereavement and counseling resource centers serving children and families
8. requires the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative to include in their annual report to the Children's and Education Committee recommendations concerning ways to promote the social and emotional development of young children

The legislature passed a bill that calls for the development of a federal Title IX compliance toolkit to assist school districts in properly implementing state and federal laws regarding the prevention, identification, and response to adult sexual misconduct ([HB 6642](#), PA 23-66). This bill calls for a working group to identify or develop a Title IX compliance toolkit for use by local and regional boards of education, students, and their parents and guardians. Under the bill, each local and regional board of education must annually (1) beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, implement the toolkit in their efforts to prevent, identify, and respond to reports of child sexual abuse, harassment, and discrimination, and (2) beginning with the 2026-2027 school year, submit a report to the State Department of Education (SDE) on their Title IX compliance.

Student Safety

To reduce the number and revise the manner in which crisis response drills are conducted in public school across the state, the legislature passed an act concerning a study of the effectiveness of the implementation of crisis response drills in public schools and their subsequent effect on children's mental health ([HB 6846](#)). This bill reduces the number of crisis response drills that local and regional boards of education must require their schools to hold each school year. It changes requirements for the crisis response drill format, including those in the law governing the standards that the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) must create for schools' security and safety plans. It also gives school boards more discretion in scheduling these drills and required fire drills throughout the school year. The bill also requires DESPP – in consultation with SDE – to evaluate the effectiveness of the bill's provisions on the number and implementation of both fire drills and crisis response drills; DESPP must report its findings and any recommendations for legislation to the Education Committee by January 1, 2025.

Freedom from Poverty

Housing

The legislature passed a bill addressing affordable homeownership opportunities in the state ([HB 6632](#), PA 23-144). This bill allows the Commissioner of Housing to consider affordable homeownership opportunities as an exemption from the prohibition against selling, demolishing or otherwise disposing of housing authority projects.

Also in the area of housing, the legislature passed an act that makes changes to laws pertaining to certain protections for group and family child care homes, including how municipalities' zoning regulations may treat them and requiring municipalities to annually certify that their zoning regulations comply with certain requirements related to these child care homes ([HB 6569](#), PA 23-142).

In Education

The legislature passed a bill that adds a half-credit of personal financial management and financial literacy to the high school graduation requirements beginning with the graduating class of 2027 ([SB 1165](#), PA 23-21). The bill also adds personal financial management and financial

literacy to the state's required program of instruction for public schools; it also makes the completion of a one-credit, mastery-based diploma assessment optional as a graduation requirement at each board of education's discretion. By making the completion of one-credit capstone a local option and allowing students to fulfill the half-credit financial literacy requirement either as a humanities credit or as an elective credit, the bill reduces the state-prescribed credit requirements from 22 to 21 credits, thereby increasing the potential credits available for electives to a range of three to four.

Tax Reform

The legislature passed a bill establishing a task force to study issues relating to the repeal of the motor vehicle property tax ([SB 497](#), SA 23-24). This task force will study the feasibility of repealing the motor vehicle property tax and options for replacing the resulting lost municipal revenue. Furthermore, the task force shall examine the potential impact of such repeal on municipal budgets and analyze possibilities for replacing municipal revenue lost as a result from such repeal.

Freedom from Discrimination

Anti-Discrimination

The legislature passed a bill revising the state's antidiscrimination statutes that adds "age" to the list of protected classes and redefines "sexual orientation" as a person's identity in relation to the gender(s) to which they are romantically, emotionally, or sexually attracted to – including any identity that a person may have previously expressed or is perceived by another person to hold ([HB 6638](#), PA 23-145).

The governor signed into law the Alvin W. Penn Racial Profiling Prohibition Act ([SB 953](#), PA 23-9), which modernizes the state's racial profiling law to reflect the reality that often race is not only motivation for detention, but a major contributing factor. This law prohibits members of the State Police, municipal police departments, and any other law enforcement agency from engaging in racial profiling (defined as the detention, interdiction, or other disparate treatment of anyone solely based on their racial or ethnic status).

Equal Access & Opportunity in Education

The legislature passed a bill concerning schools in the state ([HB 6762](#), PA 23-150) that incorporates language from multiple other bills concerning education. This bill includes language discussing the creation of an English Learners' Bill of Rights introduced in another bill this session ([HB 6663](#)) that was reworked as a Bill of Rights for Multilingual Learner Students. Secondly, this bill includes language establishing a state Civics Education and Media Literacy Task Force and including civics and media literacy in the public school curriculum from another bill introduced this session ([HB 6760](#)). In addition to the Multilingual Learner Students' Bill of Rights and the Civics Education and Media Literacy Task Force, this bill also makes changes to some aspects of early childhood and special education, and mandates an audit of the statewide mastery test.

The legislature passed a comprehensive bill concerning transparency in education ([SB 1](#), PA 23-167), which consists of language and concepts from multiple bills concerning education that were introduced this session:

For starters, while the legislature did not pass any bill specifically dedicated to the provision of free school meals to students, the language in this bill establishes a wholesome school meals pilot program that awards five grants to alliance districts to embed a professional chef in the district to assist school meal programs. This program will be administered by SDE.

The bill contains recommendations from the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee that pertain to suspensions and expulsions ([SB 1093](#)): school districts with high rates of in- and out-of-school suspension and expulsion to develop strategies to reduce these occurrences and submit said findings to the State Department of Education (SDE), for SDE to report on expulsions and related alternative education program placements, and for SDE to provide recommended assessments for screening students who exhibit mental health distress or who have been identified at risk for suicide to be utilized by school boards.

Secondly, the bill includes language regarding the implementation of reading models ([SB 1094](#)). The law requires SDE's Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success director to review and approve at least five reading curriculum models or programs for boards by July 1, 2022. The models or programs must be (1) evidence- and scientifically-based and (2) focused on competency in the following reading areas: oral language, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, rapid automatic name or letter name fluency, and reading comprehension. By law, beginning with the school year that starts July 1, 2023, each school board generally must implement one of five approved reading curriculum models or programs for grades pre-kindergarten to three. This bill narrows the scope of the reading curriculum models or programs from grades pre-kindergarten to three to kindergarten to three.

This bill also absorbs language from another act concerning school resource officers (SROs) ([SB 1095](#)). By law, each local and regional board of education that assigns an SRO to its schools must have a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the SRO's local law enforcement agency. The MOU must address the SRO's role and responsibility in the school, including the officer's interactions with students and staff, as well as training requirements. This bill adds the requirement that, as of July 1, 2023, these MOUs specify the SRO's duties and procedures for restraining students, using firearms, making school-based arrests, and reporting on investigations and behavioral interventions. Additionally, it requires school boards to post their MOU on their website and in the school where the SRO is assigned, as well as maintain the MOU in a central location in the school district. The bill additionally requires each SRO to submit to his agency's police chief a report for each investigation or behavioral intervention the SRO conducts within five days of doing so.

This bill also addresses the Connecticut school climate policy ([SB 1166](#)). The bill redefines "school climate" to mean the quality and character of the school life, with a particular focus on the quality of the relationships within the "school community," defined as (1) people, groups, businesses, public institutions, and nonprofit organizations invested in the school system's welfare and vitality; (2) students and their families; (3) board of education members; and (4) school volunteers and employees. Furthermore, it also identifies that school climate, as it is understood in the bill, is based on patterns of people's experiences of school life, reflecting the school community's norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices, and organizational structures. In regards to school climate, the bill requires the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative to convene a subcommittee tasked with developing Connecticut school climate standards based on nationally recognized school climate research and best practices by February 1, 2024, creating a uniform bullying complaint form for SDE and local and regional boards of education to include on their websites and student handbooks, and providing guidance to local and regional boards on implementing the Connecticut school climate policy. This bill also phases in the requirement for boards of education to adopt and implement a new Connecticut school climate policy over the next three school years. Beginning in the 2025-26 school year, the bill requires district- and school-level administrators and staff to assume roles related to addressing school climate. Each school district will also be required to have a school climate coordinator, school climate specialist, and school climate committee. Each school climate committee will also be required to administer an annual school climate survey to students, school employees and families of students, as long as students' parents or guardians receive prior written notice that the survey is being administered and its content; under the bill, this survey must be a research-based, validated, and developmentally appropriate survey administered to students, their families, and school employees in the predominant languages of the school community, that measures and identifies school climate needs and tracks progress through a school climate improvement plan. Each local and regional board of education will be required to provide training and resources for school employees on climate, social and emotional learning, and restorative practices – a law requiring the statewide school climate resource network is repealed through this bill.

This bill consists of language from another bill introduced this session concerning education workforce development ([SB 1197](#)). School boards will be allowed to partner with local businesses to provide aerospace and aviation apprenticeship training programs to students, and requires the creation of a working group to study the feasibility of an aviation and aerospace high school. This bill requires the development to a model paraeducator training program for high school students. School boards will be required to annually distribute information on vocational, technical, technological, and postsecondary education school options to middle school students.

This bill includes language from another bill this session regarding school indoor air quality ([SB 1198](#)). Through the bill, an Indoor Air Quality Working Group is established

to study and make recommendations on various related issues, such as (1) optimal temperature ranges to ensure healthy air and promote student learning, (2) emergency air quality conditions that warrant temporary school closures, and (3) best practices for properly maintaining school heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system (HVAC) systems. The bill also requires the working group to study and recommend (1) a needs-based system for equitably distributing funds under the HVAC system grant program for schools and (2) ways to make accessible and searchable the reports and results of the uniform inspections and evaluations of the indoor air quality and HVAC systems. The bill also requires school districts to do more frequent inspections and evaluations of public school indoor air quality and to submit the inspection results to the Department of Administrative Services (DAS), which must post them on its website. Uniform indoor air quality inspections and evaluations will be required every year rather than every three years as is currently authorized under current law and requires the inspections to use the federal Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Indoor Air Quality Tools for School Program for these inspections.

Lastly, this bill encompasses aspects from another bill introduced this session that cover equity in education ([SB 1199](#)). Through this bill, each school board will be required to submit its increasing educator diversity plan (referred to in current law as the minority educator recruitment plan) to the education commissioner by March 15, 2024, for review and approval and implement its approved plan beginning with the 2024-25 school year. The name of the existing Minority Teacher Recruitment Oversight Council is changed to the Increasing Educator Diversity Policy Oversight Council and the term "minority" student is changed to "diverse" student. Furthermore, the name of the existing minority teacher candidate scholarship program is changed to the aspiring educators diversity scholarship program, reduces the maximum grant amount from \$20,000 to \$10,000, and requires SDE to hire four staff members to administer the program. This bill adds cursive writing and world language to the K-8 Model Curriculum that SDE is currently developing.

Civic Participation

During the 2022 Connecticut gubernatorial election, the Allow for Early Voting Amendment was on the ballot as a legislatively referred constitutional amendment to amend the state constitution to authorize the legislature to provide a law for early voting before an election in the state. Over 60 percent of responses voted in the affirmative, prompting the legislature to pass a law to provide for early voting ([Ballotpedia | Connecticut Question 1, Allow for Early Voting Amendment 2022](#)). As a result, the legislature passed – and governor signed – an act implementing early voting in the state ([HB 5004](#), PA 23-5). This bill establishes a framework for early, in-person voting for all general elections, primaries, and special elections. Specifically, it requires a 14-day early voting period for general elections, a seven-day period for most primaries, and a four-day early voting period for special elections and presidential preference primaries. Under the bill, every municipality must establish at least one early voting location and may establish more. The bill also sets various requirements and procedures for early voting

including voter eligibility, ballot custody, staffing and training, and materials. The bill replaces the current election-day registration (EDR) option with same-day election registration (SDR), which covers the entire early voting period and the election for general elections. Additionally, the bill modifies the deadlines for those who wish to vote in a primary to register to vote or enroll in a political party. To accommodate the early voting period, the bill generally changes several election-related deadlines by either (1) moving the deadline 14 days earlier or (2) moving the deadline to the required number of days before the early voting period begins instead of before the election begins. The bill also sets specific deadlines for special elections. The bill also applies various existing election provisions to early voting such as voting assistance and enforcement by the State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC). Separately, the bill requires certain municipalities to annually report information on budget referenda to the Government Administration and Elections Committee, beginning by January 15, 2024. Language in this year's implementer made some changes to certain provisions in this bill: the implementation of early voting is changed to April 1, 2024, changes to early voting for elections are moved to on or after April 1, 2024, and the effective date of revisions regarding the creation of the early voting framework are moved to December 1, 2023 ([HB 6941](#), §§185-192).

Also embedded into the implementer is the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act ([SB 1226](#)). Election methods that impair a protected class members' right to vote are prohibited. The Secretary of the State is authorized to file a court action in the Superior Court and authorizes the court to impose tailored remedies for violations against voting rights. Furthermore, intimidation, deception, or obstruction related to voting are prohibited. ([HB 6941](#), §§166-171).

The legislature passed a resolution proposing a constitutional amendment to remove the state constitution's current restrictions on absentee voting ([HJ 1](#)). Due to the prominence of COVID-19 during the 2020 election, Connecticut and many other states lifted restrictions on the parameters of acceptable reasons to vote via an absentee ballot. This resolution is an extension of that notion; voters can vote through an absentee ballot without having to provide an "accepted" excuse (i.e., absence from the city or town in which they inhabit, because of sickness or physical disability, or based on the tenets of their religion). Through this resolution, voters will simply just be able to vote with an absentee ballot and not have to disclose their reason for doing so.

Date & Privacy

The governor signed into law a bill concerning artificial intelligence (AI), automated decision-making and personal data privacy ([SB 1103](#)). This bill requires the executive and judicial branches to conduct an inventory of all their systems that employ AI and develop and set policies and procedures on developing, procuring, using, and assessing systems that use AI; it also requires them to publicly post the inventory and policies and procedures online. Beginning February 1, 2024, the bill prohibits the executive and judicial branches from implementing any system that uses AI unless they have done an impact assessment to ensure the system will not result in any unlawful discrimination or disparate impact against specified individuals or groups (e.g., age and race). It also establishes a 21-member working group to make recommendations to the General Law Committee on certain issues concerning AI. Among other things, the working group must engage stakeholders and experts on how to develop best practices for the ethical and

equitable use of AI in state government. Separately, the bill prohibits state contracting agencies from entering a contract unless it has a provision requiring the business to comply with the consumer data privacy law.

Budget Highlights

Health

Gun Violence Prevention

- \$7.8 million for the public-health-centered gun violence program.
- \$9.5 million for the Project Longevity gun violence reduction program.
- \$5.0 million for housing vouchers for populations at risk of gun violence.

Criminal Justice

- \$33.2 million to fill the gap in federal Victims of Crime Act Assistance funding (ARPA).
- \$6.7 million for enhanced GPS monitoring, including high-risk populations with domestic violence charges.
- \$12.0 million for juvenile review boards to assess at-risk youth and connect them to services.
- \$10.9 million for youth violence intervention programming.
- \$14.6 million for prevention programs for at-risk youth.
- \$0.3 million to implement a behavioral incentive program at Manson Youth Institution.
- \$66.1 million for assigned counsel in criminal cases.
- \$4.2 million for judges' salaries to help with recruitment and retention.
- \$1.3 million to modernize and upgrade courthouse security and technology (ARPA).
- \$0.4 million for equipment to livestream Connecticut Supreme Court proceedings (ARPA).
- \$2.0 million for IT upgrades at the Department of Emergency Services and Public protection and Department of Correction personnel to support Clean Slate implementation.
- \$1.2 million to continue implementation of no-charge inmate calls and messages.
- \$1.0 million for Department of Correction pilot programs in alcohol-use-disorder treatment and long-acting medications.
- \$0.9 million to increase compensation for incarcerated workers.

Support for Emergency Service & Public Safety

- \$34.9 million for the Connecticut State Police wage agreements to recruit and retain state troopers.

- \$7.5 million to support local fire departments including PFAS removal from fire apparatuses, supporting volunteer fire responses to highway incidents, regional fire academies, and studying fire service in the state.
- \$1.6 million for enhancements to the State Forensic Science Laboratory.
- \$0.6 million for increased staffing at Police Officers Standards and Training, implementation of a training management software program, and creation of a cross-division data scientist position.
- \$0.5 million for body cameras for Division of Criminal Justice inspectors

Health Equity

Through a combination of General Fund and ARPA, there are many initiatives that address health equity, healthcare affordability, and avoid loss of healthcare coverage as a result of the unwinding of the public health emergency.

- Minimizes health care disruptions by:
- Providing targeted outreach to individuals with serious chronic health conditions who are losing Medicaid coverage (\$1 million in ARPA).
- Increasing support for CoveredCT, which provides zero-cost, Medicaid-like coverage for individuals just over income limits for Medicaid (\$11.7 million in FY 2024, \$22.7 million in FY 2025).
- Providing two months of premium payments for individuals eligible for federal subsidies under Access Health CT (\$10 million in ARPA).
- Providing \$17 million in additional support to the state's two financially distressed, independent hospitals (Day Kimball and Bristol) to preserve access to essential health services and help ensure financial viability.
- Erases hundreds of millions of dollars in medical debt that disproportionately impacts Black and Latino families (\$6.5 million in ARPA).
- Expands HUSKY C income eligibility to 105% FPL, after all income disregards (\$8.5 million in FY 2025).
- Extends state HUSKY coverage for undocumented children from age 12 to 15, with continuation of coverage for participants through age 18 (\$3 million in FY 2025).
- Funds a comprehensive evaluation of Medicaid rates to inform future rate increases, with a focus on access barriers and equity considerations (\$3 million in ARPA).
- FY 2025 includes \$12 million in Medicaid to begin addressing rate disparities.
- Align adult complex care rates to pediatric rates (\$600,000 in FY2024, \$1.35 million in FY 2025).
- Provides one-time grants to Federally Qualified Health Centers (\$32 million).

- Improves prescription drug affordability by facilitating participation in a multistate consortium to negotiate discounts on prescription drugs.

Health Outcomes

- Adds periodontal coverage for Medicaid members with certain conditions (\$0.4 million in FY 2024, \$1.0 million in FY 2025)
- Adds one position in the Department of Public Health to study infant deaths and produce recommendations to improve health disparities as they pertain to maternal care.
- Adds Cytomegalovirus to the newborn screening panel.

Autism, Developmental, & Intellectual Disability Supports

- Establishes lead planning role and dedicated staff at the Office of Policy and Management to review the continuum of autism services across state agencies and school districts, identify gaps, and coordinate services.
- Adds position at the Office of Policy and Management to coordinate programs and services for individuals who have intellectual or developmental disability other than autism.
- Funds Department of Developmental Services caseload growth (\$44.0 million over biennium):
- Day services for over 900 age outs and high school graduates over the biennium (\$7.3 million in FY 2024 and \$17.5 million in FY 2025).
- Residential supports for over 188 age outs and Money Follows the Person transitions over the biennium (\$5.8 million in FY 2024 and \$13.4 million).
- Adds \$21.1 million over biennium to address Department of Developmental Services waiting lists for residential programs.
- Adds a total of 320 new autism waiver slots by 2026.
- Augments transition services in Department of Aging and Disability Services and the Department of Developmental Services for youth aging out of high school.
- Stabilizes intermediate care facility providers with one-time support (\$5.6 million) and a phased rebasing to reflect actual costs (\$1.9 million FY 2024, \$2.1 million FY 2025).

Senior Supports

- Funds a new dementia services coordinator at the Department of Aging and Disability Services.
- Adds \$2.5 million in funding over the biennium to enhance elderly nutrition and meals on wheels.

Educational Success

K-12 Education

- Provides \$25 million in additional Special Education funding in FY 2024 and FY 2025.
- \$48 million in FY 2024 and \$96 million in FY 2025 to continue the ECS formula phase-in.
- \$6.6 million in FY 2024 and \$13.2 million in FY 2025 to hold towns harmless from ECS declines.
- \$150 million in FY 2025 for Education Finance Reform.

Higher Education

- Funds the state's portion of collective bargaining increases for all constituent units.
- Provides an increase of more than \$500 million over the biennium in one-time operating support to help UConn and CSCU transition back to a sustainable level of state support.
- Restructures fringe benefit funding to the constituent units to ensure that the state's unfunded pension liability is not being passed on to students and make the universities more competitive for federal grants.
- Provides \$6 million for student loan reimbursements.
- Includes permanent funding for PACT and expands PACT to include students returning to college after being previously enrolled. Increases minimum PACT award amount.

Freedom from Poverty

Tax Relief

- Reduces the state income tax by lowering the 5.0% rate to 4.5% and the 3.0% rate to 2.0% for the income year 2024. The benefits will be capped at \$150,000 for single filers and \$300,000 for joint filers.
 - One million tax filers will benefit from the rate cuts – nearly 60% of all filers.
 - 82% of the benefit will go to filers making less than \$150,000.
- Increases the Earned Income Tax Credit from 30.5% to 40%.
 - 211,000 filers will benefit from the EITC increase.
- Eliminates retirement income tax cliff by adding a phase-out for allowable pension and annuity and IRA distribution deductions against the Personal Income Tax.
- Total personal income tax relief between the above three items is approximately \$460.3 million.

Childcare

- Provides \$14.2 million and \$53.3 million in FY 2024 and FY 2025 to fund rate increases of 11% for licensed providers and 6% for unlicensed providers in the Care4Kids system. This is supplemented by a \$35 million ARPA allocation.

- \$15.5 million to increase Infant Pre-K rates to \$10,500 per pupil in School Readiness and Child Day Care Contract programs in FY 2025.

Housing

- Provides \$810 million over the biennium in capital support towards housing development and housing financial assistance, including:
- \$150 million (\$75 million annually) towards the state's popular Time-To-Own program. This level of funding is expected to assist in the purchase of more than 1,250 homes annually.
- \$200 million (\$100 million annually) to expand workforce development housing, which is expected to provide an additional 2,000 units of housing.
- \$200 million (\$100 million annually) for the Housing Trust Fund, with an emphasis on multi-unit housing in downtown areas close to transportation.
- \$200 million (\$100 million annually) for flexible housing.
- \$50 million (\$25 million annually) for the Housing Receivership Fund. This funding will provide state resources for rehabilitation of existing housing that have been put under court ordered receivership.
- \$10 million (\$5 million annually) for low-interest loans to Time-To-Own recipients for unanticipated capital improvements to their newly purchased homes.
- Provides \$2 million in FY 2024 only in ARPA funds to invest in the flexible funding subsidy pool of housing and homeless support to subsidize housing and provide flexible assistance to help individuals, families and youth overcome financial barriers and expedite solutions to homelessness.
- Provides funding of \$1 million in both FY 2024 and FY 2025 in ARPA funds for housing support services.
- Provides funding of \$10 million in FY 2024 in ARPA funds for various housing initiatives.
- Provides funding of \$1.1 million in FY 2024 and \$1.38 million in FY 2025 in General Fund dollars for the 24/7 operation of the 2-1-1 Housing Crisis line.
- Provides \$5 million in FY 2024 in the General Fund for shelters.

Transportation

- \$9.1 million in FY 2024 and \$9.4 million in FY 2025 to expand bus service to support workforce transportation.
- \$525,000 in FY 2024 and \$575,000 in FY 2025 for the Connecticut Work Zone Safety Awareness Program.
- \$4.6 million in FY 2024 and \$4.8 million in FY 2025 for Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act (IIJA) Position Funding to support 206 positions to pursue and support IIJA federal funding (positions adopted in FY 2023 midterm).

- New Haven Line funded at 86% of pre-pandemic usage in FY 2024 and fully funded in FY 2025 to match ridership trends.
- Hartford Line funded at 100% to optimize federal funding.
- Shoreline East funding exceeds current usage – 44% of pre-pandemic service in both years, compared to 30% current usage.

Environment

- \$500,000 in ARPA funding to support accessibility equipment in state parks, expanding access and opportunities.
- \$129,317 to provide funding for staff to support Environmental Justice.
- \$413,606 to fund Bureau of Energy and Technology Policy new positions.
- \$1 million each year for CTGrown for CTKids supporting Farm-to-School programs.
- \$2 million from ARPA for Container Gardens, supporting agriculture, and expanding access.
- \$3 million PFAS Removal – funding to support local fire departments as they remove PFAS foams and contamination from fire apparatus.

Economic & Community Development

- \$10 million in ARPA funding in FY 2024 for Connecticut’s Summer at the Museum Program, of this amount, \$3.5 million is earmarked to support for-profit museums.
- \$3.5 million in ARPA funds in FY 2024 and \$2.625 million in ARPA funds in FY 2025 to support theatres.
- Funding of \$1.5 million in FY 2024 and \$2.5 million in FY 2025 in the General Fund is provided to the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology (CCAT), in addition \$500,000 in both FY 2024 and FY 2025 in ARPA funds is used to support CCAT.
- \$4.5 million in FY 2024 and \$2 million in FY 2025 is provided in ARPA funds for municipal outdoor recreation.

Social Safety Net

- Increases earned income disregard under Temporary Family Assistance (TFA), allowing families to keep more of their employment earnings without impacting eligibility (\$1.2 million in FY 2024, \$3.1 million in FY 2025).
- Increases TFA time limits from 21 months to 36 months (\$230,000 in FY 2024, \$1.2 million in FY 2025).
- Doubles asset limits under TFA and State Administered General Assistance to \$6,000 and \$500, respectively (\$900,000 in FY 2024, \$3.7 million in FY 2025).
- Provides funding to community action agencies to distribute flexible client support funds for individuals and families facing immediate economic hardship (for example, food, housing, and transportation costs) (\$10 million in ARPA).

- Increases burial benefit to \$1,800 (\$1.2 million in FY 2025).
- Supports anticipated costs of federally-required 9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (\$2.2 million in FY 2024, \$3.1 million in FY 2025).
- Annualizes expansion of Family First prevention programs under Department of Children and Families (\$377,500 in FY 2024 and FY 2025).
- Establishes nursing home specialized unit infrastructure fund to encourage in-state development of additional specialized services (bariatric, vent, dialysis beds) (\$4 million in ARPA).
- Stabilizes and strengthens residential care homes (RCHs) through a rebasing of rates to current costs using 2022 cost reports, the most recently audited rate year (\$5.2 million in FY 2024 and FY 2025).
- Provides capital funding to RCHs that are grandfathered into outdated health and safety codes to encourage compliance with current codes (\$5 million in ARPA).
- Allows retroactive eligibility for state supplement to help residents with the costs of care and help stabilize payments for RCHs and rated housing facilities (\$0.4 million in FY 2024, \$0.5 million in FY 2025).
- Adds agency-based Personal Care Attendant (PCA) services as an option to allow individuals that choose not to self-direct to benefit from these services while remaining independent at home (savings of \$12.3 million in FY 2024, cost of \$3.1 million in FY 2025).
- Provides capital grants for mobile vans for the free clinics operating in Connecticut that provide mobile health care (\$500,000 in ARPA).
- Increases funding for migrant support (\$1 million in both FY 2024, FY 2025; \$3.25 million in ARPA).

Freedom from Discrimination

Civic Participation

- \$1.8 million to help fund early voting for towns.
- \$1.3 million in FY 2024 and \$1.32 million in FY 25 for early voting.
- The sum of \$1.8 million to the Secretary of the State for early voting for the FY ending in June 30, 2024 to provide grants of up to \$10,500 to each municipality for early voting.

Expansion of CWCSEO Mandates & Responsibilities

- ❖ The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, & Opportunity (CWCSEO), in collaboration with the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative and at least one community-based bereavement and grief counseling resource center serving children and families, is required to conduct a study of community-based

bereavement and grief counseling organizations and services for children and families to determine both the extent and availability of community-based bereavement and grief counseling organizations and services statewide and the feasibility of and recommendations for implementation of a statewide program for the delivery of these services at no cost to participants. The recommendations must include (1) the types of services the program should provide; (2) eligibility criteria for children and families to access these services; (3) the optimal geographic distribution of such services; and (4) opportunities to utilize gifts, grants, or donations from private services and any available federal funding to fund these programs in whole or in part. The bill requires the commission, by January 1, 2024, to submit a report to the Children’s Committee that includes study findings and any legislative recommendations for the implementation of a statewide program for the delivery of bereavement and grief counseling services for children and families. ([SB 2](#), PA 23-101)

- ❖ The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, & Opportunity (CWCSEO) must convene and lead a working group to identify or develop a Title IX compliance toolkit for use by local and regional boards of education, students, and their parents and guardians. Under the bill, each local and regional board of education must annually (beginning with the 2025-2026 school year) implement the toolkit in their efforts to prevent, identify, and respond to reports of child sexual abuse, harassment, and discrimination, and (beginning with the 2026-2027 school year) submit a report to the State Department of Education (SDE) on their Title IX compliance. ([HB 6642](#), PA 23-66)
- ❖ The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, & Opportunity (CWCSEO) is listed as a member of the Connecticut Civics education, Civic Engagement, and Media Literacy Task Force. The task force must study and develop strategies to improve instruction on civics, citizenship, media literacy, and American government. Under the bill, (1) “civics” is the study of citizens’ rights and obligations and (2) “media literacy” is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and participate with media in all forms by understanding the media’s role in society and building inquiry and self-expression skills that are essential to participating and collaborating in a democratic society. The task force's study must include: a review of the existing state and national curricula and standards; a review of the recommendations from educators, administrators, government entities, nongovernmental organizations, and the public; a review of existing civics, citizenship, media literacy, and American government educational opportunities provided throughout Connecticut by governmental and nongovernmental entities and organizations; and an exploration of the feasibility of establishing public and private partnerships to fund, coordinate, promote, and support enhancements to engagement and instruction. ([HB 6762](#), PA 23-150)
- ❖ The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, & Opportunity (CWCSEO) is listed as a member of the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) task force. The task force must

develop recommendations regarding: the student equity implications of appropriating funds through the state TRS laws toward the pension normal cost and the unfunded liability amortization payments necessary to fully fund the TRS (unfunded liability payments are made due to underfunding in previous years); whether and how much municipalities should contribute to the pension normal cost and the unfunded liability amortization payments in order to make the General Assembly's allocations more equitable on a per-pupil basis; whether certain municipalities should be exempted from assuming a percentage of the municipal contributions identified above due to the following factors: (a) economic distress, (b) inability to pay, or (c) low academic performance; and whether and how the resources generated through municipal contributions should be directed by the General Assembly toward (a) reducing educational inequities and (b) promoting the TRS sustainability. ([HB 6880](#), PA 23-159)

- ❖ The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, & Opportunity (CWCSEO) is listed as a member of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Working Group. This working group is part of the legislative branch and must make recommendations to the General Law Committee. The work group must make recommendations concerning, and develop best practices for, the ethical and equitable use of AI in state government, make recommendations concerning the policies and procedures, assess the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy's "Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights" and similar materials and make recommendations concerning (a) regulating AI's use in the private sector based on, among other things, the blueprint, and (b) adopting a Connecticut AI bill of rights based on the blueprint, and make recommendations on adopting other legislation concerning AI. The Commission is listed as a non-voting ex-officio member for this body. ([SB 1103](#), PA 23-16)

The following updates were included in the language of the implementer ([HB 6941](#)):

- ❖ Existing law requires the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, & Opportunity (CWCSEO) to provide administrative support to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Health and Human Services Network. Language in the implementer renames the LGBTQ Health and Human Services Network to the LGBTQ Justice and Opportunity Network, in addition to modifying the Network's scope; the network is now tasked with making recommendations to the state legislative, executive, and judicial branches about access and opportunity services to LGBTQ people in the state, instead of about the delivery of health and human services for these individual. (§150)
- ❖ The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, & Opportunity (CWCSEO) will hire a food and nutrition policy analyst to coordinate state efforts to reduce food insecurity and food deserts, promote food as medicine, and provide data on access to nutritionally adequate

food. The food and nutrition policy analyst must be qualified by training and experience to perform the office's duties. (§§157-161)

- ❖ The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, & Opportunity (CWCSEO) is removed as a member of the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health. (§§197-199)
- ❖ Existing law requires the two-generational initiative ("the initiative") to collaborate across public and private sectors to support early childhood care and education, health and workforce readiness, and economic self-sufficiency across two generations in the same household. The law established the Two-Generational Advisory Board ("the advisory board") as part of the initiative to advise the state on these topics. The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, & Opportunity (CWCSEO) is required to review and make recommendations on the initiative's participating and appointed membership, including specific recommendations on family engagement strategies and advisory board composition. The bill also requires the Commission to develop a two-generational advisory strategic plan that outlines the board's role in identifying short-, medium-, and long-term strategies to maximize state investments in family-driven multigenerational success. The plan must include recommendations on: aligning the initiative with regional and national initiatives that use private sector collaboration, national research, and data from other states; a short-, medium-, and long-term resourcing strategy with recommendations to leverage existing public, private, and philanthropic resources from state and local partners; expanding the initiative's focus to more robustly support family well-being, economic engagement, and mobility through expanded partnerships, targeted investment, and leveraging new and existing resources; increasing public understanding of, and engagement with, the initiative; tracking two-generational outcomes for families in the state, including parents involved with the initiative as advisory board members; and developing a constituency for the initiative across all public and private sectors of the state. CWCSEO must develop a data-driven, two-generational policy and outcomes dashboard that tracks (1) two-generational outcomes of families in the state, as required in the strategic plan described above and in accordance with existing interagency data sharing protocol and (2) other data related to the initiative. Lastly, the bill requires the CWCSEO executive director to present the strategic plan to the advisory board and submit it to the Appropriations, Children, Housing, Human Services, and Labor committees by September 1, 2024. (§202)

Conclusion

The 2023 legislative session marks a promising trajectory to the work that has been done and the work that continues to be done. The legislature passed sweeping pieces of educational legislation with the advice and assistance of the Commission. Citizens in the state will have access to early voting, with increased attention to civics education for the younger generation in our school systems and protected voting rights for vulnerable populations. A significant bill addressing nursing home transparency and reporting requirements, supports for people with dementia, and recommendations set forth by the Homemaker-Companion Agency Task Force was passed this session. Child marriage will be prohibited in Connecticut, and lodging organizations will be unable to offer hourly rates to mitigate the occurrence of sex trafficking in our state. Members of the State Police, municipal police departments, and any other law enforcement agency are prohibited from engaging in racial profiling.

Beyond the implementation efforts of the bills that passed this session, the upcoming year also brings additional opportunity to expand on intersectional efforts. The compensation of family caregivers and non-parent guardians is an important issue that can be revisited as we prioritize our strategy for next session. There is opportunity for more progress to be made in the realm of incarcerated individuals' voting rights and opportunities. Female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C) continues to be an important issue for the health and safety of people across the state. Housing equity and opportunity is a fundamental touchstone of one's quality of life; there is more work to be done in eliminating housing insecurity and homelessness in Connecticut.

With these initiatives and more, the Commission continues to expand the breadth of its outreach both in the legislature and in the community. As we transition from this legislative session and turn to prepare for the year ahead, we will continue to navigate through a community- and data-driven lens in our strive for increasing equity and opportunity for the state's vulnerable and underserved populations.