

From the House

New State Budget Invests in Connecticut's and Hartford's Future

By Rep. Matt Ritter

I couldn't be prouder of the work we accomplished during the legislative session, and I am grateful for the input and recommendations I received from many of you as we worked together on the issues you care about.

One of the top responsibilities of the legislature is to adopt a state budget, and we not only did that on time, but on a bipartisan basis with no tax increases. The new state budget takes effect July 1, and invests heavily in our cities and towns to help stabilize property taxes, our local nonprofits and families needing vital assistance.

Specifically, for Hartford, this means \$22 million in new PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) funding each of the next two years to help make up for the large amount of tax exempt property in the City. There is also an additional \$3.4 and \$6.8 million in new funding for Hartford schools over the next two years as part of the state's ECS (Education Cost Sharing) formula.

This budget also puts Connecticut on stronger financial footing, by maintaining a historic balance in the state's "Rainy-Day Fund" and paying down long-term debt, all contributing to our first credit upgrade in decades.

We recognized that during these challenging and unprecedented times, Connecticut must rally behind our people, businesses and industries. This starts by investing in our disproportionately underserved communities.

One of the ways we did this is by funding debt-free community college, ensuring all Connecticut residents can receive a college education regardless of their financial situation. We also increased the state's earned income tax credit for low-income working families with children.

We took a number of steps to help struggling businesses and stimulate our economy. This includes COVID-related relief to businesses in need, promoting equitable business practices, and additional support and resources for women and minority-owned businesses, as well expanded workforce development programs.

Special attention was given to our tourism, art, and restaurant industries who saw significant declines due to closures and safety practices brought on by the pandemic. This funding is critical to our museums, art centers, restaurants and tourist attractions, many of which are right here in Hartford and serve as economic drivers for our City.

Hartford residents will also specifically benefit from new investments in Elizabeth Park, Keney Park Golf Course, and the revitalization of Batterson Park.

In addition, we provided increased funding for hospitals and local health departments in response to COVID-19. This includes additional resources to those on the frontlines of the pandemic including nursing homes, prisons, schools and nonprofit providers.

As we continue to recover emotionally and financially from the pandemic, this budget will help us move forward and I am optimistic that Hartford and Connecticut will be stronger than ever.

Please contact me if I can ever be of any assistance. I can be reached at Matthew.Ritter@cga.ct.gov, on Facebook @RepresentativeMattRitter or by phone at (860) 240-8489, if you have any questions or concerns.