

## From the House

### New State Laws Took Effect July 1

By Rep. Matt Ritter

A variety of new laws passed by the legislature aimed at improving quality of life in Connecticut took effect July 1. Many of the bills approved this year targeted the disparate impacts the COVID-19 pandemic has had on our communities while also addressing numerous archaic laws and practices in a more equitable way to better our state for everyone.

Here are just a few of the laws and provisions I thought you'd be interested in knowing about that began on July 1:

- Public schools will now be required to include Black and Latino Studies in their curriculum to provide students with a more comprehensive understanding of our history.
- Possession of recreational cannabis for personal use by adults age 21 and older became legal. Regulated retail sales of cannabis are projected to begin in Connecticut by the end of 2022. The majority of revenue from commercial cannabis sales will be used to establish an Equity Fund to help Connecticut begin to right the wrongs of the War on Drugs. This includes criminal justice reforms and creating economic opportunities for communities disproportionately affected by this divisive and failed policy.
- We authorized legalizing sports betting by allowing the Governor to amend agreements with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe and the Mohegan Tribe in order to modernize gaming in Connecticut.
- Stores can no longer offer those 10-cent single-use plastic bags at checkout anymore. Protecting our environment is an ongoing challenge and removing single-use plastic bags from the waste stream is a positive step in the right direction. Paper bags will still be available, and residents are encouraged to bring their reusable bags when shopping.
- Adoptees 18 and older will now have access to their birth certificates, offering them the opportunity to better understand the history of their biological families.

### State Investing \$7 Million in Improvements to Farmington Avenue

This new funding, which was just approved by the Bond Commission on July 23, is in addition to \$4.5 million bonded in 2018 and \$1.5 million in 2016 that funded streetscape and walkability improvements along the historic avenue.

One of my goals as your state representative has been to improve our main arteries – Asylum Ave, Farmington Ave and Albany Ave – to ensure they are more than just shortcuts for commuters heading to the suburbs. This is the latest investment the state has made in our neighborhoods over the past decade.

Dave MacDonald, Executive Director of the Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association (AHNA), said, "AHNA is very pleased to see this substantial state investment in the revitalization of Asylum Hill. We thank State Representative Matt Ritter for his steadfast

support of our neighborhood's revitalization and look forward to celebrating the completion of the Farmington Avenue streetscape renovation with him in the future." In addition to streetscape improvements that will make Farmington Avenue easier for people to get to work, walk, bike, shop and dine at local restaurants, the funding will help purchase blighted properties for redevelopment. Work is expected to begin in the next 6-12 months.

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