

From the House Our Responsibility to Those Left Behind During the Pandemic

By Rep. Matt Ritter

We cannot ignore the stark reality that many people are suffering due to the pandemic. Unemployment is high, and disparities in wealth have become even more pronounced in the last year. Understandably, people are scared and exhausted.

Connecticut has a responsibility to help families recover from this pandemic, and that will lead to increased costs for education, health care and child care. That is why it is critical that Congress pass President Biden's stimulus package and include direct financial assistance for all 50 states.

Our state could receive about \$2.7 billion as part of the new stimulus package. When that happens, we should create a separate fund with the money from the stimulus package dedicated for COVID-related recovery needs. COVID has taught us a lot, including the importance of a building a robust "rainy day" budget reserve for the state.

So, to be clear, Connecticut should have two distinct reserve funds. The first — the current "rainy-day" reserve fund — which protected us this year from a disastrous budget scenario - should be used sparingly and conservatively. The second reserve fund should be used to address COVID-related expenses.

The state's new COVID-response fund, created with federal stimulus dollars — would allow us to invest in after-school programs, small businesses, the arts, and health disparities. We should only use that fund to address the direct impacts of the pandemic.

If we are prudent in the use of these two funds, we will make our present better and our future more stable by avoiding broad tax increases, maintaining a healthy rainy-day reserve and continuing to pay down past state debt.

It is our collective responsibility to chart a course that doesn't leave anyone behind.

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