# Table of Contents

Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 3
High-Level Overview of Connecticut’s Fiscal Controls and Budget ............................................ 4
Policy Priority: Money in Our Pockets ...................................................................................... 7
Policy Priority: Strong Workforce ............................................................................................ 15
Policy Priority: Affordable Homes .............................................................................................. 23
Policy Priority: Safe and Healthy Communities .......................................................................... 36
Introduction

Connecticut’s 2023 legislative session began on Wednesday, January 4 and adjourned on Wednesday, June 7 with the bi-partisan passage of a $51.1 billion state budget for fiscal years 2024 and 2025 (FY 24 and 25). The budget is the clearest reflection of our state’s priorities and values. What's most notable is that when so many Connecticut children and families are hurting now, the tension between supporting families living in the state today versus supporting families who may live in the state in the future played out in real time. This is a result of policymakers developing the budget within the limits of several major fiscal controls, or “guardrails,” that include a spending cap, volatility cap, revenue cap, and more. While many of these fiscal controls are smart policies, some of the fiscal controls are duplicative and others ensure austerity budgets. Nevertheless, these fiscal controls were the result of the Connecticut General Assembly voting unanimously in February for emergency-certified legislation, which the Governor subsequently enacted, that extends the State’s bond covenants for at least five years, and possibly up to ten years. Although surplus dollars will go toward paying down the State’s massive unfunded liabilities, which is also important, these fiscal controls effectively prevented policymakers from providing and increasing many essential public investments and services needed to soften the federal pandemic relief cliffs.

Even within the confines of the fiscal controls, Connecticut Voices for Children (CT Voices) and our values-aligned partners had several major legislative successes this session. While we also had some major legislative disappointments—many of which will require reforming or circumventing some of the fiscal controls moving forward in order to be advanced in the future—we took away a number of lessons. To provide a summary of this year’s legislative actions on our biennial policy priorities, this document proceeds in five sections. The first section provides a high-level overview of Connecticut’s fiscal controls and budget. The next four sections provide an overview of our four major policy priorities highlighted below:

- **Money in Our Pockets.** Our biennial goal is to put more money in the pockets of low- and middle-income families to reduce child poverty and the state’s high-level of income and wealth inequality and racial and ethnic income and wealth gaps.

- **Strong Workforce.** Our biennial goal is to build a strong and diverse workforce. Workers need conditions that provide stability and remove barriers to work, including but not limited to equitable education systems that generate and develop our workforce pipeline.

- **Affordable Homes.** Our biennial goal is to create more affordable housing in every town across the state. We need eviction mitigation and tenant protections, preservation and first-time grants as well as land-use reforms and development dollars to curb the crisis.

- **Safe and Healthy Communities.** Our biennial goal is to ensure that all residents live in safe and healthy communities. Families thrive and young people are fully engaged in school when prevention, intervention, and diversion supports are designed and well resourced.
High-Level Overview of Connecticut’s Fiscal Controls and Budget

Using an emergency certification to bypass the standard committee and public hearing process, the Connecticut General Assembly passed H.B.6671: An Act Concerning Funding for School Lunches and a Center for Sustainable Aviation, Special Education Funding, Certain Bottle Deposits, Certain State Positions and the Posting of State Job Openings and Bond Covenant Restrictions and the Budget Reserve Fund. As noted in the long title, the bill includes several major fiscal controls that impact the budget and are highlighted below.

- The bill **extends the various bond covenants, also known as the bond lock.** As the Office of Legislative Research summarizes, the bond lock “requires the state treasurer to include a pledge to bondholders in general obligation (GO) and credit revenue bonds issued from July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2025 (i.e., FYs 24 and 25), that the state will comply with specified fiscal controls, except under limited circumstances. Under the bill, this pledge applies through FY 33 unless the General Assembly adopts a resolution by June 30, 2028, not to continue it beyond FY 28.”

- The bill **increases the maximum capacity of the Budget Reserve Fund** from 15 percent to 18 percent of net General Fund appropriations beginning July 1, 2024.

- The bill **freezes the revenue cap** on General Fund and Special Transportation Fund appropriations at 98.75 percent of estimated revenues.

- The bill **modifies several bonding caps.** As the OLR summarizes, beginning in fiscal year 2024 (FY 24), the bill “requires that the bond allocation cap be calculated on a fiscal year, rather than calendar year, basis and sets the cap amount at $2.4 billion for FY 24; aligns the bond issuance cap to the allocation cap by increasing it to $2.4 billion for FY 24; eliminates the bond allotment cap but replaces it with a similar cap; excludes specified debt from the state’s debt limit and certain bond cap calculations.”

In addition to the above legislation regarding major fiscal controls, the General Assembly passed H.B. 6941: An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2025, and Making Appropriations Therefor, and Provisions Related to Revenue and Other Items Implementing the State Budget. Table 1 provides a high-level overview of the budget for fiscal years 2023 through 2025. Note that the analysis here is based on H.B. 6941, including House Amendment A but not House Amendment B. At the time of this analysis, the fiscal note for House Amendment B did not provide enough information to include it; however, it’s important to note that the amendment makes relatively small fiscal changes and therefore will not substantially alter the final budget numbers. Several key high-level findings are highlighted below:
The spending cap limits the growth in appropriations to 3.8 percent in FY 24 and 3.5 percent in FY 25. According to the fiscal note for H.B. 6941 (before House Amendments A and B), the growth in appropriations is 3.8 percent in FY 24 and 3.5 percent in FY 25, and the budget is under the spending cap by only $14.4 million in FY 24 and by only $2.2 million in FY 25. This leaves policymakers no room for substantially more spending without circumventing the spending cap through a revenue intercept.

The revenue cap is not currently an essential fiscal control when taking into account both the Budget Reserve Fund and the volatility cap. The Budget Reserve Fund (BRF)—which currently has a balance of more than $3.3 billion, or the equivalent of 15 percent of General Fund appropriations—is the primary mechanism to prevent spending cuts and tax increases due to an economic downturn. The volatility cap—which limits the amount of revenue from the two most volatile taxes—is the secondary mechanism to prevent spending cuts and tax increases due to an economic downturn. Moreover, the volatility cap adjustment (i.e., the excess revenue from the two volatile tax sources) funds the BRF and the adjustments are estimated at more than $680 million in FY 24 and nearly $660 million in FY 25. The revenue cap is the third mechanism to prevent spending cuts and tax increases due to an economic downturn. Under the new legislation passed this session, the revenue cap limits General Fund and Special Transportation Fund appropriations at 98.75 percent of estimated revenues. At its current rate, the revenue cap is estimated to restrict the use of about $310 million in revenue in FY 24 and about $320 million in revenue in FY 25. When taking into account both the BRF and the volatility cap, the revenue cap—which targets all revenue, not only volatile revenue—is not currently an essential fiscal control and, although the restricted revenue could not be used to increase spending substantially without violating the spending cap, it could be used to fund tax cuts for low- and middle-income families.

Without the revenue cap, the new budget could have included a permanent, fully refundable Connecticut child tax credit (CT CTC). The General Fund has an estimated pre-revenue cap operating balance of nearly $400 million in FY 24 and nearly $300 million in FY 25. In both fiscal years, the pre-revenue cap operating balance for the General Fund is more than enough to cover the cost of a permanent, fully-refundable CT CTC. For example, in a report CT Voices published last year, we estimated that a $450 per child, fully-refundable CT CTC with no phase-in would cost $275 million a year.

Even with the revenue cap, the new budget could have included a one-year extension of last year’s Connecticut child tax rebate (CT CTR). The General Fund has an estimated post-revenue cap operating balance of nearly $120 million in FY 24 and nearly $10 million in FY 25. In FY 24, even the post-revenue cap operating balance could have funded an extension of last year’s child tax rebate of $250 per child, which was initially estimated to cost $125 million but ultimately cost less than $100 million.
Table 1. Overview of the Budget for Fiscal Years 2023–2025, in millions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY 2023 Budget</th>
<th>FY 2024 Budget</th>
<th>$ Change</th>
<th>% Change</th>
<th>FY 2025 Budget</th>
<th>$ Change</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Fund</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Revenue</td>
<td>$22,388.2</td>
<td>$22,505.3</td>
<td>$117.1</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>$23,103.7</td>
<td>$598.4</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Appropriations</td>
<td>$22,089.2</td>
<td>$22,105.6</td>
<td>$16.4</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>$22,805.9</td>
<td>$700.3</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating Balance</td>
<td>$299.0</td>
<td>$399.7</td>
<td>$100.7</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
<td>$297.8</td>
<td>-$101.9</td>
<td>-25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating Balance After Revenue Cap</td>
<td>$19.1</td>
<td>$118.4</td>
<td>$99.3</td>
<td>518.4%</td>
<td>$9.0</td>
<td>-$109.4</td>
<td>-92.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volatility Adjustment</td>
<td>$1,847.5</td>
<td>$683.2</td>
<td>-$1,164.3</td>
<td>-63.0%</td>
<td>$659.6</td>
<td>-$23.6</td>
<td>-3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operating Balance + Volatility Adjustment</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,146.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,082.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>-$1,063.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>-49.5%</strong></td>
<td><strong>$957.4</strong></td>
<td><strong>-$125.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>-11.6%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special Transportation Fund</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Revenue</td>
<td>$2,091.9</td>
<td>$2,352.6</td>
<td>$260.7</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>$2,354.5</td>
<td>$1.9</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Appropriations</td>
<td>$1,826.2</td>
<td>$2,148.4</td>
<td>$322.2</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>$2,286.4</td>
<td>$138.0</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating Balance</td>
<td>$265.7</td>
<td>$204.2</td>
<td>-$61.5</td>
<td>-23.1%</td>
<td>$68.1</td>
<td>-$136.1</td>
<td>-66.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating Balance After Revenue Cap</td>
<td>$239.6</td>
<td>$174.8</td>
<td>-$64.8</td>
<td>-27.0%</td>
<td>$38.7</td>
<td>-$136.1</td>
<td>-77.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating Balance</td>
<td>$265.7</td>
<td>$204.2</td>
<td>-$61.5</td>
<td>-23.1%</td>
<td>$68.1</td>
<td>-$136.1</td>
<td>-66.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Appropriated Funds</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Revenue</td>
<td>$281.1</td>
<td>$871.3</td>
<td>$590.2</td>
<td>210.0%</td>
<td>$908.9</td>
<td>$37.6</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Appropriations</td>
<td>$280.7</td>
<td>$864.8</td>
<td>$584.1</td>
<td>208.1%</td>
<td>$902.2</td>
<td>$37.4</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating Balance</td>
<td>$0.4</td>
<td>$6.5</td>
<td>$6.1</td>
<td>1517.5%</td>
<td>$6.7</td>
<td>$0.2</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Appropriated Funds</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Revenue</td>
<td>$24,761.2</td>
<td>$25,729.2</td>
<td>$968.0</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>$26,367.1</td>
<td>$637.9</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Appropriations</td>
<td>$24,196.0</td>
<td>$25,118.2</td>
<td>$922.8</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>$25,994.4</td>
<td>$875.6</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating Balance</td>
<td>$565.1</td>
<td>$610.4</td>
<td>$45.2</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>$372.7</td>
<td>-$237.7</td>
<td>-38.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating Balance After Revenue Cap</td>
<td>$259.1</td>
<td>$299.7</td>
<td>$40.6</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>$54.4</td>
<td>-$245.2</td>
<td>-81.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volatility Adjustment</td>
<td>$1,847.5</td>
<td>$683.2</td>
<td>-$1,164.3</td>
<td>-63.0%</td>
<td>$659.6</td>
<td>-$23.6</td>
<td>-3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Operating Balance + Volatility Adjustment</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,412.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,293.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>-$1,119.1</strong></td>
<td><strong>-46.4%</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,032.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>-$261.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>-20.2%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fiscal year 2023 estimated revenue and appropriations from the Office of Fiscal Analysis, [Connecticut State Budget, FY 23 Revisions](https://www.ct.gov/ofi). Fiscal years 2024 and 2025 estimated revenues from the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee, [Revenue Schedule, June 5, 2023](https://www.ct.gov/ofi). Fiscal years 2024 and 2025 appropriations from [H.B. 6941](https://www.ct.gov/legam). House Amendment A, but not House Amendment B. At the time of this analysis, the fiscal note for House Amendment B does not provide enough information to include it, but the amendment makes relatively small changes.
Policy Priority: Money in Our Pockets

A major policy priority this legislative session was to put more money in the pockets of low- and middle-income families to reduce child poverty and the state’s high-level of income and wealth inequality and racial and ethnic income and wealth gaps.

We had several major legislative successes on this front:

- The budget **funds the CT Baby Bonds Trust**, which will give eligible babies (i.e., born on or after July 1, 2023 and whose births were covered under HUSKY) up to $3,200 in the state trust. Once those eligible babies turn 18 years (but no older than 30), the money can be used for an eligible expenditure, such as education, buying a home or investing in a business, making financial investments or transferring into a retirement savings account.

- The budget **increases the CT earned income tax credit (CT EITC)** from 30.5 percent to 40 percent of the federal credit, which will provide substantial financial support for low-income families.

- The budget **reduces the CT personal income tax (CT PIT)** by lowering the 3 percent bracket to 2 percent and the 5 percent bracket to 4.5 percent. It also adds a new tax recapture provision that helps to target the tax cut primarily to low- and middle-income families.

- The budget **increases tax transparency and tax compliance** in two key ways, which will hopefully help to make the tax system fairer moving forward and in turn put more money in the pockets of low- and middle-income families. Specifically, the budget requires a more comprehensive tax incidence report and also requires a tax gap analysis and strategy.

- The budget does **not increase the CT pass-through entity tax credit (CT PETC)**, which would have primarily provided a tax cut for high-income and wealthy families.

- The budget **improves Temporary Family Assistance (TFA)**, the state’s cash assistance program for low-income families, by extending the program’s time limit, by increasing the program’s asset limit, and by increasing the income disregard limit.

We also had some legislative defeats that we will work to address next session:

- The budget does **not include a Connecticut child tax credit (CT CTC)**, which would have provided essential support to low- and middle-income families with children.

- The budget **increases the CT film and digital media tax credit**, which is revenue that could be better used to fund a CT CTC or other progressive fiscal policies.
For a more comprehensive overview of our efforts to put more money in the pockets of low- and middle-income families, below are the relevant bills that we testified on this legislative session. However, it’s important to note that some of the language in these bills may have changed in the final days of their respective debate, prior to enactment. As such, please make sure to read the statute language to understand the full impact of the new laws:

**H.B. 5673.** An Act Concerning the Reformation of Certain Taxes and Tax Equity

- **Bill Summary.** The bill included several major proposals, which we addressed in four broad categories in our testimony. First, the bill included proposals that would raise revenue and we explained our support for increasing the top personal income tax rate and hiring auditors to close and/or reduce the state’s tax gap. Second, the bill included proposals that would reduce the unfair tax burden on low- and middle-income families and we explained our support for both increasing the Connecticut earned income tax credit (CT EITC) and establishing a permanent, refundable Connecticut child tax credit (CT CTC). Third, the bill included proposals that would make Connecticut’s tax system fairer by increasing tax transparency, which we supported. Fourth, the bill included a proposal to reduce wage theft, which we supported.

- **Bill History.** The Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee held a public hearing on the bill and then included in the joint favorable substitute for S.B. 981 the proposals to increase tax transparency and increase the CT EITC, which were also then included in the final budget, H.B. 6941.

**H.B. 6586.** An Act Concerning Supplemental Nutrition Assistance

- **Bill Summary.** The bill proposed to “adjust distribution of supplemental nutrition assistance benefits so that beneficiaries receive monthly benefits at multiple intervals during the month” and “ensure persons who received recent increases in Social Security payments don't lose such benefits.” In our testimony, we supported the bill, explaining that it would provide needed adjustments for grandparents raising children that recently received small increases in Social Security benefits to prevent them from losing eligibility. Increasing the benefit in this way would allow more families to qualify, which in turn allows these families a more stable opportunity to plan for expenses and create sustainable household budgets.

- **Bill History.** The Human Services Committee held a public hearing on the bill and then passed a joint favorable substitute and then the Appropriations Committee passed the bill as well.
**H.B. 6629.** An Act Concerning Temporary Family Assistance

- **Bill Summary.** The bill proposed to “extend the time limit for temporary family assistance to sixty months and to gradually reduce benefits for newly employed beneficiaries to encourage employment.” In our testimony, we supported the bill, explaining that it provides needed security for families, especially families who experienced the sudden shock of losing a job during the COVID-19 pandemic. Allowing families more time to get back on their feet will set them up for greater success in the future and create a stable foundation for their families to grow.

- **Bill History.** The Human Services Committee held a public hearing on the bill and then passed a joint favorable change of reference to send it to the Appropriations Committee. This proposal was included in the final budget, **H.B. 6941**.

**H.B. 6659.** An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2025 and Making Appropriations Therefor

- **Bill Summary.** While not in the bill, our testimony explained that CT Baby Bonds establishes a trust for the benefit of children whose births are covered by Connecticut’s Medicaid program. For each eligible baby, the state would deposit $3,200, which when the child turns 18 years, they could then use that money for several purposes to center financial security, including asset ownership. These baby trusts would invest in the estimated 16,000 babies born into poverty each year in Connecticut—40 percent of births in the state, according to the State Treasurer’s office. This watershed moment made Connecticut the first state in the country to develop a wealth equity policy that has the potential to break generational cycles of poverty as well as promotes long-term economic growth in our state. Today, thanks to Connecticut’s vision, a growing number of states across the country are considering similar programs.

- **Bill History.** The Appropriations Committee held a public hearing on the bill and funding for CT Baby Bonds was ultimately included in the final budget.

**H.B. 6929.** An Act Concerning the Film and Digital Media Production Tax Credits

- **Bill Summary.** The bill proposed to increase the film and digital media production tax credits claimed against the sales and use tax from 78 percent to 92 percent. In our testimony, we highlighted two major reasons for our opposition to the proposal. First, according to the state’s own pre-2022 broad economic impact analyses, Connecticut lost an average of nearly $80 million a year in revenue from the film tax credit program, which more than offset the average total gain from the other major business assistance tax credit programs administered by the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). Second, according
to the state’s own most recent broad economic impact analysis, Connecticut still loses revenue from the film tax credit program. In our subsequent testimony for the public hearing on the DECD’s 2022 annual report, we highlighted three additional reasons for our opposition. First, an extensive body of research finds that film, television, and digital media tax credits do not generate substantial economic growth, especially when compared to programs that provide support for low- and middle-income families. Second, eliminating or reducing the film, television, and digital media tax credits program and using the revenue to establish a permanent, refundable CT CTC would help to reduce child poverty, it would help to make the tax system fairer for low- and middle-income families, and it would help to grow the state’s economy. Third, establishing a permanent CT CTC is exceptionally popular overall and has substantial bipartisan support.

- **Bill History.** The Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee held a public hearing on the bill and passed it out of the committee as both a standalone bill and as part of the JFS for S.B. 981. This proposal was included in the final budget, H.B. 6941.


- **Bill Summary.** The bill included many major proposals, four of which we addressed in our testimony. First, the bill proposed to reduce the Connecticut personal income tax (CT PIT) by lowering both the 3 percent tax bracket to 2 percent and the 5 percent bracket to 4.75 percent. It also included a new tax recapture provision that would limit the tax cut to single tax filers making up to $200,000 and married tax filers making up to $400,000. We supported this proposal because it would help to make Connecticut’s tax system fairer and was more targeted than the governor’s proposed reduction of the CT PIT. As a result, this proposal would leave more revenue to increase the state earned income tax credit (CT EITC) and create a refundable state child tax credit (CT CTC), both of which would help to reduce child poverty and make the tax system fairer. Second, the bill proposed to increase CT EITC from 30.5 percent of the federal EITC to 40 percent. We supported this proposal because it would make Connecticut’s tax system fairer and reduce child poverty. However, we also recommended that policymakers make the CT EITC available to immigrant families, who work and pay taxes but are currently excluded from both the federal EITC and CT EITC, and we recommended that policymakers create a refundable CT CTC. Third, the bill proposed to require the Department of Revenue Services (DRS) to provide an estimate of and strategy to reduce the state’s tax gap. We supported this proposal because, based on the limited data currently available, we estimate that Connecticut could potentially generate up to $2.6 billion a year in revenue, primarily from high-income and wealthy tax filers, by providing additional funding for the DRS to increase tax compliance. Fourth, the bill proposed to require the DRS to provide more information in future tax incidence reports. We
supported this proposal because Connecticut’s tax incidence report provides limited information and more information is essential to increase the fairness of the state’s tax system.

- **Bill History.** The Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee held a public hearing on the bill and then included the proposals referenced above in the joint favorable substitute for [S.B. 981](#). However, the JFS bill proposed to increase the CT EITC to 45 percent rather than 40 percent. The proposals to increase the CT EITC and to report on the tax gap and tax incidence were all included in the final budget, [H.B. 6941](#).

### S.B. 771. An Act Establishing a Refundable Child Tax Credit

- **Bill Summary.** The bill proposed to establish a refundable Connecticut child tax credit (CT CTC) of $250 per child, up to three children, for single tax filers making up to $100,000 and married tax filers making up to $200,000. In our [testimony](#), we explained that creating a refundable CT CTC has several major benefits. It would make Connecticut’s tax system fairer and reduce poverty because it is targeted to support low- and middle-income families. It would make the state more competitive in retaining and attracting taxpayers because Connecticut is currently the only high cost of living state in the U.S. with an independent income tax that does not include either a child/dependent deduction or credit designed specifically to lower the income tax burden based on the number of children and/or a child care costs. Lastly, it would boost the economy by increasing the income available to low- and middle-income families, which could be used to increase spending on necessities, including child care, which in turn would make it easier for some residents, especially women, to rejoin the labor force. We also recommended that policymakers make the CT CTC available to immigrant families, who work and pay taxes—they file using an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN)—but are excluded from the federal CTC.

- **Bill History.** The Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee held a public hearing on the bill.

### S.B. 772. An Act Increasing the Applicable Percentage of the Earned Income Tax Credit

- **Bill Summary.** The bill proposed to increase the Connecticut earned income tax credit (CT EITC) to 40 percent of the federal credit. In our [testimony](#), we explained that increasing the CT EITC has several major benefits It would make Connecticut’s tax system fairer and reduce poverty because it is targeted at low-income families—in 2023, the CT EITC only applies to single tax filers making up to about $57,000 and married tax filers making up to about $63,000. It would especially provide increased support for low-income families with children because the size of the credit increases based in part on the number of children. However, the CT EITC is different from an income tax credit, such as a child tax credit,
specifically designed to adjust a tax filer’s income tax burden based on family size and/or child care expenses. Increasing the CT EITC would also strengthen Connecticut’s economy by increasing the purchasing power of low-income families and encouraging work. We also recommended that policymakers make the CT EITC available to immigrant families, who work and pay taxes—they file using an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN)—but are currently excluded from both the federal EITC and CT EITC.

- **Bill History.** The Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee held a public hearing on the bill and then included the proposal in the joint favorable substitute for S.B. 981. However, the JFS bill proposed to increase the CT EITC to 45 percent rather than 40 percent and this proposal was then included in the final budget, H.B. 6941.

**S.B. 774.** An Act Adjusting Certain Marginal Rates for the Personal Income Tax and Establishing a Capital Gains Surcharge

- **Bill Summary.** The bill included three proposals, all of which we supported in our testimony. First, the bill proposed to increase the personal income tax rate of 6.9 percent to 7.2 percent, which would only apply to single and married tax filers earning more than $250,000 and $500,000, respectively; and it proposed to increase the personal income tax rate of 6.99 percent to 7.49 percent, which would only apply to single and married tax filers earning more than $500,000 and $1 million, respectively. Second, the bill proposed to establish a capital gains surcharge of 0.75 percent for single and married tax filers earning more than $250,000 and $500,000, respectively; and it also proposed to establish a surcharge of 1 percent on for single and married tax filers earning more than $500,000 and $1 million, respectively. Third, the bill proposed to reduce the 5.5 percent personal income tax bracket to 5 percent and adjust the benefit recapture provision to limit the tax cut to tax filers in that tax bracket.

- **Bill History.** The Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee held a public hearing on the bill and then included the proposal to reduce the Connecticut personal income tax (CT PIT) for low- and middle-income families in the joint favorable substitute for S.B. 981. However, the JFS bill proposed to reduce the CT PIT by lowering both the 3 percent bracket to 2 percent and the 5 percent bracket to 4.5 percent and it also included a tax recapture provision to cap the tax cut to single and married tax filers earning up to $200,000 and $400,000, respectively.

**S.B. 776.** An Act Concerning a State-Wide Property Tax on Certain Residential Real Property

- **Bill Summary.** The bill proposed to establish a state-wide property tax at the rate of 1 mill on residential real property with an assessed value of more than $1.5 million and 2 mills on residential real property with an assessed value of $2 million or more. In our testimony, we
explained that establishing a statewide property tax on high-value properties would make Connecticut’s tax system fairer if the tax is well designed.

- **Bill History.** The Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee held a public hearing on the bill.

### S.B. 981. An Act Concerning Revenue Items to Implement the Governor’s Budget

- **Bill Summary.** The bill included many major proposals, three of which we addressed in our [testimony](#). First, the bill proposed to increase the Connecticut earned income tax credit (CT EITC) from 30.5 percent to 40 percent. We estimated that the tax cut would cost $42 million a year and nearly 100 percent of it would go to low- and middle-income families. Second, the bill proposed to reduce the Connecticut personal income tax (CT PIT) by lowering both the 3 percent bracket to 2 percent and the 5 percent bracket to 4.5 percent. We estimated that the tax cut would cost $458 million a year and about $376 million, or 82 percent, would go to low- and middle-income families and about $82 million, or 18 percent, would go to high-income and wealthy families. Third, the bill proposed to increase the Connecticut pass-through entity tax credit (CT PETC) from 87.5 percent to 93.01 percent. We estimated that the tax cut would cost $57.5 million a year and about $4 million, or 7 percent, would go to low- and middle-income families and about $53 million, or 93 percent, would go to high-income families. Overall, we estimated that the three major tax proposals would cost $557 million a year and about $422 million, or 76 percent, would go to low- and middle-income families and about $135 million, or 24 percent, would go to high-income and wealthy families. We then recommended that policymakers reform the tax program to only provide support for low- and middle-income families and use the extra $135 million to establish a permanent, fully-refundable Connecticut child tax credit (CT CTC), which is essential when taking into account three key factors: the state’s high level of economic inequality, the state’s unfair tax system, especially for families with children, and the state’s unfair spending system.

- **Bill History.** The Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee held a public hearing on the bill and passed a joint favorable substitute (JFS) bill that included the following proposals: increase the CT EITC to 45 percent; decrease the CT PIT and include a tax recapture provision to cap the tax cut to single and married tax filers earning up to $200,000 and $400,000, respectively. The JFS bill excluded increasing the CT PETC and the creation of a CT CTC.

### S.B. 1241. An Act Concerning a Payroll Expense Tax

- **Bill Summary.** The bill included three major proposals: create a Connecticut employer payroll tax, create a Connecticut employee payroll tax credit, and create a Connecticut
Social Security program. In our testimony, we demonstrated the proposed legal tax incidence of the bill and raised several key questions for policymakers to address before moving forward: What is the estimated overall tax savings to Connecticut? What is the distributional impact of the new employer payroll tax and employee payroll tax credit once employers shift the tax burden “through to employees and consumers in the form of higher prices for goods and services, lower wages, and other adjustments”? What is the distributional impact on the federal tax system for CT residents? What is the distributional impact of the CT Social Security program? What is the distributional impact on federal Social Security benefits for CT residents?

- **Bill History.** The Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee held a public hearing on the bill.

**S.B. 1245.** An Act Concerning High Poverty-Low Opportunity Census Tracts

- **Bill Summary.** The bill included three proposals, two of which we addressed in our testimony. First, the bill proposed to authorize state bonding for multiple purposes within “high poverty-low opportunity census tracts,” defined as a census tract in which 40 percent or more of the residents have incomes below the federal poverty level. One of the purposes for the bonding included “the establishment or improvement of preschool education, preschool enrichment or preschool day care programs.” Second, the bill proposed to establish “a program that encourages homeownership and tenant retention in qualifying census tracts by providing an exemption from the personal income tax to qualifying residents who reside in a qualifying census tract.” In particular, the bill proposed to exempt from the Connecticut personal income tax (CT PIT) a resident who has resided in a qualifying census tract for at least two years and whose federal adjusted gross income does not exceed $250,000 for single tax filers and $500,000 for married tax filers. This would provide a tax cut of up to $15,400 for single tax filers earning up to $250,000, which is more than about 98 percent of single tax filers earned in 2020—the latest year data are available—and it would provide a tax cut of up to $30,800 for married tax filers earning up to $500,000, which is more than about 95 percent of married tax filers earned in 2020. Overall, we supported the first proposal and recommended that if policymakers desire to provide further support for the lowest-income tax filers in high poverty census tracts, the most effective approach is to increase the CT EITC, create a refundable state child tax credit (CT CTC), and/or improve the state property tax credit (CT PTC) by making it refundable and available to renters.

- **Bill History.** The Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee held a public hearing on the bill and then included the two proposals reviewed above in the joint favorable substitute of **S.B. 980**. However, the JFS bill proposed to limit the elimination of the CT PIT to single tax filers earning up to $125,000 and married tax filers earning up to $200,000.
Policy Priority: Strong Workforce

A second major policy priority this legislative session was to build a strong and diverse workforce. Residents of Connecticut want to provide for their families and contribute to their communities. Policymakers can create the conditions needed for residents to do this by ensuring that workers are fairly compensated for their time and labor, removing barriers to work, and strengthening the education systems that help today’s children grow into tomorrow’s workforce.

We had several major legislative successes on this front. Again, however, it’s important to note that some of the language in these bills may have changed in the final days of their respective debate, prior to enactment. As such, please make sure to read the statute language to understand the full impact of the new laws:

- The budget expands Care 4 Kids child care vouchers to children who are placed in foster care, children who were adopted within the past year, and homeless children and youth, and it appropriates $35 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to Care 4 Kids in FY 24.

- The budget increases child care provider compensation by raising School Readiness per child reimbursement grants and supporting an annual rate increase for both licensed and unlicensed Care 4 Kids providers.

- The budget makes child care more accessible for diverse families by funding interpreter services in Birth to Three programs and by funding a staff position to manage the Parent Cabinet that advises the Office of Early Childhood on family needs. Legislation passed by both chambers also removes municipal barriers that prevent people from opening family child care homes and group child care homes in their neighborhoods.

- The budget provides educational support for children with high levels of need by implementing and funding the revised Education Cost Sharing formula, funding the Excess Cost Grant above the FY 23 level, appropriating $150 million in FY 25 to supplement educational grant programs, raising eligibility levels for free meals to students whose families earn up to 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, and extending grant programs to assist schools in hiring mental health support staff and implementing mental health care programming.

We also had some legislative defeats that we will work to address next session:

- Policymakers did not pass legislation to ensure wage parity between early care providers and K-12 educators with similar credentials and experience. The low wages in the early child
care sector create untenable business models and contribute to educators leaving to take higher-paid jobs teaching kindergarten.

- Policymakers did not pass provisions to reduce the cost burden of early care and education for families. The federal government has taken the position that families should not pay more than seven percent of their income on child care, but child care comprises 14 to 18 percent of the budgets of most Connecticut families with young children.

- Policymakers did not increase the subminimum wage, provide predictable scheduling, or expand Connecticut’s paid sick days’ law, all of which primarily harms low-wage workers in the private sector.

- Policymakers did not reverse the ongoing decline in public sector employment. To “reflect historical staffing,” the budget includes a lapse of $80 million in appropriations in FY 24 and a lapse of $129 million in appropriations in FY 25.

For a more comprehensive overview of our efforts to build a strong workforce, below are the bills that we testified on this legislative session:


- **Bill Summary.** The bill proposes four major changes to the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grants that provide the bulk of State financial support to local educational districts. It would apply the use of a per pupil funding formula weighted by student need to the funding of magnet and charter schools and regional agricultural science and technology education centers, and magnet schools and regional agricultural science and technology education centers would no longer charge tuition. It would ensure the new formula adjusts for previous tuition to hold schools harmless. It would revise the ECS formula to fully fund towns that have been previously underfunded. Finally, the bill proposes increasing accountability measures to ensure that increased funds are spent directly on supporting students and teachers and engaging families and community partners through creation of a commission, creating a complaint process for when a party believes charter schools are not meeting the educational interests of the state, and revising the alliance district program. Our [testimony](#) supports the full funding of the ECS grant in fiscal year 2025 as a way to provide students with immediate educational support and strengthen their success and economic security in the future. We support the modified ECS shifting funds toward high-needs populations as soon as possible.

- **Bill History.** The Education Committee passed this bill with substitute language that made technical changes. It received unanimous support from members of the Education Committee. [The final budget](#) reflects implementing the revised ECS grant to provide much-
needed funding to historically underfunded school districts while also holding harmless districts that are considered overfunded according to the revised ECS grant formula.

**H.B. 5854.** An Act Concerning the Number of Wage and Hour Inspectors at the Labor Department

- **Bill Summary.** The bill would amend the general statutes “to require a minimum of forty-five wage and hour inspectors to be employed at the Labor Department.” In our [testimony](#), we supported the bill for the following reasons. First, Connecticut has a higher level of wage inequality compared to the U.S. as a whole. Second, Connecticut has substantial gender, racial, and ethnic wage gaps that increase wage inequality for certain groups of workers, even when controlling for the key wage factors of experience, education, union coverage, and more. Third, increasing the number of wage and hours inspectors will help to reduce Connecticut’s high level of wage inequality and substantial gender, racial, and ethnic wage gaps because wage theft disproportionately harms low-wage workers, which disproportionately includes women and workers of color. Fourth, increasing the number of wage and hours inspectors will help to reduce Connecticut’s high level of wage inequality and substantial gender, racial, and ethnic wage gaps because public sector jobs, which are highly unionized, have a fairer wage distribution. Fifth, increasing the number of wage and hours inspectors will help to boost Connecticut’s job recovery, which lags the job recovery for the U.S. as a whole and includes a disproportionate loss of state and local government jobs, the sector over which policymakers have the most direct control.

- **Bill History.** The Labor and Public Employees Committee held a public hearing on the bill and then passed a joint favorable change of reference to send it to the Appropriations Committee.

**H.B. 6590.** An Act Concerning Certain Protections for Group and Family Child Care homes.

- **Bill Summary.** The bill would expand land-use protections for child care homes by prohibiting municipalities from requiring special permits or special exceptions for family or group child care homes in residential areas or treating group child care homes differently than single or multi-family dwellings in residential areas. In our [testimony](#), we strongly supported this bill, emphasizing its potential to increase the availability of licensed child care providers and effectively address the needs of working families in Connecticut. We underscored the pressing demand for affordable child care, citing our research on the diminishing capacity of the early care industry and the limited access to quality child care in many communities across the state. Additionally, we highlighted the long-term economic benefits associated with high-quality early child care, including job creation, increased workforce participation for parents, and positive outcomes for future generations in terms of economic prosperity and academic development. We argued that current barriers, such as restrictive local zoning laws, hinder home-based child care providers from establishing.
businesses, earning a livelihood, and delivering essential care to local families. We pointed out that by enhancing the protections for home-based child care, we can create a safe and nurturing environment for numerous young children while supporting the economic and educational well-being of families and communities in Connecticut.

- **Bill History.** The Housing Committee held a public hearing on the bill and passed a joint favorable substitute. The House referred the bill to the Committee on Planning and Development, who gave the substitute a joint favorable report. The bill was then passed by the House and by the Senate.

**H.B. 6594.** An Act Concerning Noncompete Agreements

- **Bill Summary.** The bill would establish new restrictions on noncompete agreements, especially in making them unenforceable against low-wage workers—specifically, “if such worker is (1) an employee whose monetary compensation is less than three times the minimum fair wage, or (2) an independent contractor whose monetary compensation is less than five times such minimum fair wage.” In our [testimony](#), we supported the bill for the following reasons. First, Connecticut has a higher level of wage inequality compared to the U.S. as a whole. Second, Connecticut has substantial gender, racial, and ethnic wage gaps that increase wage inequality for certain groups of workers, even when controlling for the key wage factors of experience, education, union coverage, and more. Third, limiting the use of noncompete agreements for low-wage workers will help to reduce Connecticut’s high level of wage inequality and substantial gender, racial, and ethnic wage gaps.

- **Bill History.** The Labor and Public Employees Committee held a public hearing on the bill and then passed a joint favorable substitute.

**H.B. 6686.** An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Office of Early Childhood.

- **Bill Summary.** This bill proposed numerous changes to early childhood care and education programs. It would have expanded eligibility for participation in School Readiness Programs to include infants and toddlers, edited qualifications for staff who hold primary responsibility for a classroom of children, allowed five-year-olds to repeat a year of School Readiness and defer kindergarten if they will benefit from such a change, allowed the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) to set Care 4 Kids redetermination eligibility at a higher income level, removed COVID-era requirements that providers should use increased grant rates to increase staff pay. It also added running a parent cabinet to OEC responsibilities, allowed OEC to share information about complaints with law enforcement, and allowed OEC to order medical examinations as part of the complaint investigation process. We submitted [testimony](#) in favor of this bill with concerns about removing the requirement that increased per child grant funds be used for teacher salaries because low early care educator salaries are
a primary driver of Connecticut’s early care and education (ECE) workforce crisis. We also expressed concerns regarding the sections allowing law enforcement officers to request records shared with OEC because our research has shown that parents who do not have documentation still hesitate to share information with the State due to fears of deportation, and this creates a significant barrier to them being able to access care.

- **Bill History.** The Education Committee unanimously voted in favor of substitute language that removes the proposed edits to qualifications for staff to hold primary responsibility for a classroom of children, removes the proposal that would allow OEC to set Care 4 Kids redetermination eligibility at a higher level, and requires OEC to partner with DPH to create best practices for ordering a medical examination. Following passage out of the Education Committee, the bill was sent to the Appropriations Committee, where it did not receive a vote. The FY 24 and FY 25 budget expands Care 4 Kids by creating a “protective service class” within Care 4 Kids eligibility that allows the Commissioner of OEC to waive eligibility requirements for foster parents seeking Care 4 Kids for a foster child, adoptive parents seeking Care 4 Kids for a newly adopted child, and homeless children and youth. It additionally funds a Parent Cabinet staff position.

**H.B. 6759.** An Act Concerning Early Childhood Care and Education

- **Bill Summary.** The bill would require that early childhood care and education programs pay their employees according to the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) compensation schedule. It also would allow providers of child care services with appropriate training to administer epinephrine for the purposes of emergency first aid to children even in the absence of prior written authorization of a parent or guardian or qualified medical professional. We supported this bill in our testimony, however we expressed concern regarding the cost of implementing the bill absent additional funding. We strongly agreed that the State should ensure wage parity between early childhood staff and similarly credentialled elementary school staff. Implementing the compensation schedule would almost double the salary of teachers at child care centers and could triple the salaries of FCC providers, lifting these educated and hard-working professionals out of poverty. We suggested that raising reimbursement rates for publicly-funded care to 90 percent of the market rate is one mechanism to help early care providers implement the compensation schedule. We also advocated that families should not have to pay more than seven percent of their income on child care, so we are wary of shifting increased cost of care to families. We requested that legislators amend the bill to specify that the State will assume the costs of implementing the compensation schedule rather than forcing providers to shift the increase in costs to parents.

- **Bill History.** The Education Committee held a public hearing on the bill and then passed a joint favorable change of reference to send it to the Appropriations Committee. The Appropriations Committee did not take action. The FY 24 and FY 25 budget raises
reimbursement rates slightly by including funding to raise the School Readiness per child reimbursement from $8,927 to $10,500 beginning in FY 25 and to increase the Care 4 Kids reimbursement rate for licensed providers by 10 percent each year in FY 24 and 25 and for unlicensed providers by 5 percent each year in FY 24 and 25.

**H.B. 6859. An Act Concerning Predictable Scheduling**

- **Bill Summary.** As the Office of Legislative Research explains, the bill “requires “employers in specified sectors (i.e., retail, food service, hospitality, or long-term health care services establishments) with at least 500 employees to pay employees when the employer, without meeting certain notice requirements, (1) cancels or reduces scheduled hours or (2) adds work hours or changes the date, time, or location of a work shift without reducing hours. The bill applies to employees who are paid hourly and not exempt from minimum wage or overtime rules. It allows exceptions to these requirements under certain circumstances, such as when an employee makes a written request for leave; employees mutually agree to swap shifts; or during power outages or a declared state of emergency.” In our testimony, we supported the bill because unpredictable work schedules negatively impact the health, well-being, and economic security of hourly wage workers. In particular, an unpredictable work schedule limits the ability of an hourly wage worker to know how much money they will earn each week and whether the amount will be sufficient to make ends meet. It also limits the following: their ability to work a second job to supplement their income if they do not know in advance the hours that they will work, their ability to go back to school and improve their employment prospects, their ability to plan for child care, and their ability to schedule something as simple and important as a doctor’s appointment for themselves or their children.

- **Bill History.** The Labor and Public Employees Committee held a public hearing on the bill and then passed it, and the Appropriations Committee also passed the bill.

**H.B. 6901. An Act Concerning Student Loan Reimbursement Program**

- **Bill Summary.** The bill proposes to establish a loan reimbursement pilot program for Connecticut residents in certain professions who graduated from a state college or university. In our testimony, we explained that Connecticut’s population has stagnated over the past decade despite an increase during the pandemic. Our economy and our state’s fiscal health suffer from the loss of much-needed workers and taxpayers. H.B. 6901 may help increase Connecticut’s taxpayer base, and therefore, increase the revenue available to make sustained, critical investments in programs that support Connecticut’s children, families, and future. Moreover, to qualify for this program, a participant must be employed full-time as a nurse, teacher, or in child care, mental health, or social services; H.B. 6901 will incentivize
students to enter these fields currently facing massive workforce shortages and encourage them to remain in Connecticut after graduation.

- **Bill History.** The Appropriations Committee held a public hearing on the bill and passed a joint favorable substitute and the House passed an amended version of the bill with bipartisan support. The Senate did not vote on this bill. The final budget includes a pilot program to annually reimburse eligible Connecticut residents for up to $5,000 of their student loan payments for up to four years in exchange for volunteering for a nonprofit. Eligible residents include those who graduated from an in-state college or university or who hold an occupational or professional license or certification issued by the Connecticut Public Health or Consumer Protection commissioners.

**S.B. 1177. An Act Concerning One Fair Wage**

- **Bill Summary.** As the Office of Legislative Research explains, “this bill removes the law’s ‘tip credit’ provision, which currently allows employers to pay hotel and restaurant staff and bartenders who customarily receive tips less than the minimum wage, as long as their tips make up the difference. Under current law, the tip credit allows employers to pay hotel and restaurant staff $6.38 per hour and bartenders $8.23 per hour, as long as their tips make up the rest of the minimum wage requirement (currently $14.00 per hour). Removing the tip credit requires employers to pay these employees at least the full minimum wage.” In our testimony, we supported the bill, explaining that by keeping the subminimum wage in place, many workers, especially women and workers of color, will continue to experience inequitable tipping practices. In a study conducted by One Fair Wage in 2021 nearly 90 percent of Black service workers surveyed reported their tips have fallen during the pandemic by 50 percent or more. In another study conducted by One Fair Wage in 2022, 50 percent of all women and 58 percent of women of color surveyed said they are not making the full minimum wage after tips. These examples show that despite the real hourly wage growing for low- and middle-income workers, reliance on tips perpetuates wage inequities, especially as the minimum wage increases and the subminimum wage remains stagnant.

- **Bill History.** The Labor and Public Employees Committee held a public hearing on the bill and then passed a joint favorable substitute.

**S.B. 1178. An Act Expanding Connecticut Paid Sick Days**

- **Bill Summary.** The bill proposes to “expand Connecticut paid sick days' law to (1) cover all private-sector employers and employees, (2) broaden the range of family members employees may use leave for, (3) increase rate at which employees accrue leave, (4) broaden reasons employees may use leave, and (5) increase the maximum amount of hours an employee may accrue.” In our testimony, we supported the bill, explaining that the current
carve outs exclude 88 percent of Connecticut’s workforce from accessing paid sick days and potentially contribute to declining labor force participation. One way to potentially address the state’s diminished labor force is to eliminate barriers around accessing paid sick days. By aligning a paid sick day law with Connecticut’s Paid Family and Medical Leave law, workers would be able to take paid time off to care for a loved one including a child of any age, instead of leaving the workforce. The proposed law would also allow paid sick time to be used when a workplace, school or place of care is closed for a public health emergency, creating another safety net for workers to be able to take the time they need without having to leave the workforce altogether.

- **Bill History.** The Labor and Public Employees Committee held a public hearing on the bill and then passed a joint favorable substitute. The Senate then passed an amended version of the bill.

S.B. 1219. An Act Concerning Fully Funding Excess Costs for Special Education

- **Bill Summary.** The bill proposes to require a study of funding needed to fully cover excess costs for special education. In our testimony, we explained that a district’s enrollment of students with special education needs changes year to year. While districts can budget for changes in special education service funding to a certain extent, changes above what they predict can spend districts spiraling into budget crises. Over the last fifteen years, the Excess Cost Grant, Connecticut’s fund for supporting districts in paying for special education students with very expensive needs and students with no identifiable home district, has covered a reduced share of district claims. Worse still, this aid is distributed inequitably. The state’s wealthiest districts receive many times more Excess Cost Grant funding than those with the lowest community wealth. We, at CT Voices, have previously researched and written about these challenges in a published report as well as in testimony last year.

- **Bill History.** The Appropriations Committee held a public hearing on the bill and passed a joint favorable.
Policy Priority: Affordable Homes

A third major policy priority this legislative session was to ensure that all of Connecticut’s residents have the opportunity to live in affordable homes. Affordable homes are secure and comfortable housing options available to low- and middle-income households, enabling them to adequately meet their housing needs without facing excessive financial hardship. Typically, the costs of these homes do not exceed 30 percent of a household’s income.

We had several major legislative successes on this front. Again, however, it’s important to note that some of the language in these bills may have changed in the final days of their respective debate, prior to enactment. As such, please make sure to read the statute language to understand the full impact of the new laws:

- The budget allocated hundreds of millions of dollars in additional funding for affordable housing, workforce housing, and homelessness services. These additional resources offer a valuable infusion of funding that will help the state provide new housing opportunities for and better support individuals facing housing insecurity and homelessness, though it falls short of the total amount required to address the problem.

- Policymakers passed provisions to increase the permissible charges municipalities can impose on landlords for housing code violations. This measure could provide protection for tenants from being forced to live in unsafe housing conditions. It aims to discourage landlords from neglecting necessary repairs in their housing units by imposing more substantial penalties.

- Policymakers passed legislation to enhance tenant protections, encompassing various provisions such as the right to conduct a walk-through of an apartment prior to renting, restrictions on fees imposed by landlords (such as late fees and screening fees), access to screening reports, and other safeguards. These measures aim to establish a fairer balance of power between tenants and landlords, ensuring greater security and rights for tenants.

- Policymakers implemented measures to restrict access to eviction records, introducing new guidelines for sealing such records and eliminating identifying information in cases where no eviction judgment was issued. These actions will help eliminate obstacles tenants face when seeking suitable housing options, thus promoting greater housing accessibility for many individuals.

- The budget incorporates incentives to promote mixed housing development, encouraging towns to collaborate with the Connecticut Municipal Redevelopment Authority (MRDA) and adopt zoning regulations that facilitate higher-density housing construction in development
districts near transit stations or downtown areas. These measures seek to foster vibrant and diverse communities with enhanced access to transportation and amenities.

- The two-year bonding package includes nearly $1 billion in new authorizations to expand housing in the state. This includes $200 million for housing development and rehabilitation, with up to $60 million of that for revitalizing moderate housing units in the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority’s State Housing Portfolio; $450 million for the Housing Trust Fund, with up to $200 million of that for the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority to administer a revolving loan fund to finance workforce housing projects; $150 million for the Time-to-Own program and $10 million for capital improvements to residential properties purchased with the assistance of that program; $50 million for the Housing Receivership Revolving Fund; and $125 million for the Housing Environmental Improvement Revolving Loan Fund.

We also had some legislative defeats that we will work to address next session:

- Policymakers did not pass zoning requirements that would allow for the development of more affordable housing; specifically, bills addressing fair share and transit-oriented development lost most of their teeth in the final bills that were passed. However, the principle remains potent in legislation passed to collect information on housing needs across the state. Mandating towns to zone for affordable housing and attaching more robust incentives to zoning housing near transit to improve housing development would have gone a long way to address the affordable housing shortage.

- Policymakers did not pass an expansion of fair rent commissions. This would have allowed renters in more towns to access the protections that fair rent commissions provide against the excesses of landlords.

- Policymakers did not include provisions for rent stabilization, which would have established a system to restrict the magnitude of rent increases imposed by landlords. Such measures would have protected tenants against excessive rent hikes and promoted more stable and affordable housing conditions.

- Policymakers did not incorporate any provisions to expand the eligibility criteria for the security deposit guarantee program. This missed opportunity means that many families facing housing affordability challenges and needing new housing will not benefit from the assistance provided by the program.

- Policymakers did not enact legislation to expand the jurisdiction of Public Housing Authorities (PHAs). This missed opportunity hinders the ability of PHAs to develop properties in new areas and limits the flexibility of their housing voucher programs. By
expanding PHA jurisdiction, barriers to affordable housing could have been reduced, benefiting many renters and potentially increasing the availability of housing options.

For a more comprehensive overview of our efforts to ensure that all of Connecticut’s resident’s have affordable homes, below are the bills that we testified on this legislative session:

**H.B. 1113. An Act Concerning Fair Rent Commissions**

- **Bill Summary.** The bill would require that towns with a population of at least 5,000 establish fair share commissions. This represents a change from the existing statutes, which only require that municipalities with populations of 25,000 or more fulfill this mandate. In our testimony, we supported this bill for several reasons. Firstly, fair rent commissions play a crucial role in providing necessary support to renters who face challenges such as negligent maintenance, unfair rental prices, or the need for an impartial platform to resolve disputes. Secondly, considering the extremely low vacancy rates and escalating rents, it is essential to enable more tenants to file complaints against landlords who exploit their market power to neglect property upkeep and demand excessive rent hikes. However, a significant issue exists: numerous rent-burdened families reside in towns where fair rent commissions are nonexistent, and there is no legislative requirement to establish them. Consequently, renters in these towns are at a higher risk of enduring unjust treatment and potentially residing in inhospitable conditions due to the fear of losing their homes. Lastly, we argued that the proposed bill is a proactive measure to tackle the housing crisis and can potentially safeguard thousands of tenants from being taken advantage of by unscrupulous landlords.

- **Bill History.** The Insurance and Real Estate Committee held a public hearing on the bill.

**H.B. 6391. An Act Increasing Penalties for the Violation of Municipal Regulations and Ordinances**

- **Bill Summary.** The bill would raise the maximum fine for housing code violations to $500 for the first violation and $750 for subsequent violations. In our testimony, we expressed support for this bill, emphasizing its importance in enabling municipalities to enforce crucial local laws, particularly housing codes that safeguard residents' right to safe and quality housing. We highlighted the current issue of landlords finding it financially convenient to pay the existing low fine rather than undertaking necessary and consistent maintenance, leading to unsafe living conditions for tenants. We presented examples of major landlords who have repeatedly faced fines for housing code violations, underscoring the urgent need for a higher maximum fine. Additionally, we drew attention to the fact that the value of the current $250 maximum fine has significantly eroded due to inflation since its establishment in 2003. Given these circumstances, we argued that raising the maximum fine from $250 to $1,000 would empower municipalities, ensure compliance with local ordinances, and
effectively address housing code violations. By increasing the penalty for non-compliance, this bill can significantly improve housing conditions and the overall well-being of tenants.

- **Bill History.** The Planning and Development Committee held a public hearing for the bill. There was a vote to draft the bill, and this was sent to the Judiciary Committee. It received a joint favorable report from the Judiciary Committee. As part of S.B. 998, the concept of raising the maximum housing code fine passed the House and Senate. The provision that passed raises the fine to $2,000 and also caps the fine for violations found on the same date at that amount.

**H.B. 6400. An Act Prohibiting Hostile Architecture**

- **Bill Summary.** The bill would prohibit the installation of hostile architecture in public places. In our testimony, we emphasized the inhumanity of hostile architecture in public spaces, which is deliberately designed to restrict specific uses or activities and discourage certain groups from occupying or utilizing those spaces. We pointed out that this type of architecture disproportionately targets vulnerable populations, with persons experiencing homelessness being one group that is frequently targeted and significantly impacted by these design choices. Such designs effectively punish individuals experiencing homelessness and expose them to increased risks and dangers. We argued that homelessness is a constant reminder of the underlying structures of inequality and economic injustice. Rather than designing public spaces to hide the visibility of homelessness, we urged the state to invest that funding in addressing the structural issues that contribute to the circumstances leading individuals to sleep on uncomfortable public benches.

- **Bill History.** The Planning and Development Committee held a public hearing on the bill.

**H.B. 6554. An Act Appropriating Funds for Certain Homelessness Response Programs**

- **Bill Summary.** The bill would appropriate $51 million for certain homelessness response programs, including support for homeless youth, the Coordinated Access Network, and cold weather emergency services. In our testimony, we expressed our support for the crucial $51 million investment in homelessness services in our state. We underscored the significance of making this investment to swiftly secure housing for individuals and families in need while equipping them with the necessary resources to regain stability in their lives. Emphasizing our firm belief, we stated that investing in homelessness services is not only a morally imperative action but it also represents a wise investment in the well-being of our communities and the future of our state. We firmly asserted that a strong economy, vibrant neighborhoods, and thriving families can only be achieved when we ensure that no one is left behind. We pointed out that by providing comprehensive homelessness services, we can create a society that upholds compassion, dignity, and equal opportunities for all.
Bill History. The Housing Committee held a public hearing on the bill and then passed a joint favorable change of reference, sending it to the Appropriations Committee. While the full funding requests included in this bill did not all pass, some additional money to fight homelessness was included in the budget. Over the biennium, this includes at least $2 million for a Flexible Funding Subsidy Pool for Housing and Homeless Support, $2 million for Housing Support Services, $1,000,000 for Rapid Rehousing, $10,000,000 for various additional housing initiatives, an additional $10 million over last year’s allocation for housing/homeless services, an additional $4 million for Congregate Facilities Operation Costs, and $2.5 million in new dollars for housing for participants in the Project Longevity gun violence prevention program.

H.B. 6588. An Act Concerning Rent Stabilization

Bill Summary. This bill would prohibit landlords from increasing rent during the first year of a tenancy and public health emergencies. Furthermore, it would cap the annual rent increase, restricting it to a specific calculated amount. In addition, the bill would require landlords to provide written notice to tenants at least 90 days before implementing any rent increase. In our testimony, we expressed our support for this bill and its potential to provide stability and security for renters in Connecticut. Firstly, we highlighted the alarming increase in rent prices in Connecticut, surpassing those in other states. Secondly, we argued that Connecticut's ongoing housing affordability crisis is leading to widespread housing displacement. Thirdly, we drew attention to the lack of robust measures to protect tenants from rent gouging practices in the rental market. Fourthly, we contended that the proposed rate struck a fair balance, allowing landlords to earn a reasonable profit while safeguarding tenants from excessive rent hikes. Fifthly, we called for complementary measures that incentivize the development of mixed-income housing and ensure that rental properties meet the necessary code requirements. Lastly, we underscored the successful implementation of similar laws in other states and stressed the importance of this measure in providing stability to renters and preventing disruptive displacement.

Bill History. The Housing Committee held a public hearing.

H.B. 6593: An Act Concerning Housing Authority Jurisdiction

Bill Summary. The bill would allow housing authorities to develop and operate affordable housing outside of their municipal boundaries with the approval of the local municipality. In our testimony, we firmly supported this bill, emphasizing that empowering public housing authorities (PHAs) to construct affordable housing and administer housing vouchers in areas with greater resources would greatly enhance housing choices and opportunities for low-income families and children. First, we drew attention to the prevailing housing affordability
crisis and underscored how the current jurisdictional limitations of PHAs hinder their ability to address these challenges effectively. We further highlighted the significant role that PHAs have played as major operators and developers of high-quality, mixed-income housing, as well as administrators of housing choice vouchers. Recognizing the impact of housing segregation on families and children, we emphasized that confining PHAs within narrow jurisdictional boundaries severely restricts their capacity to provide comprehensive solutions. We expressed our strong conviction that expanding the jurisdiction of PHAs promotes economically and racially diverse communities and fosters greater access to affordable housing options throughout the state. Moreover, we underscored the economic benefits that would arise from this expansion proposing that PHA jurisdiction is a crucial element in solving the complex puzzle of affordable housing and that by removing jurisdictional barriers, we can unlock new possibilities for addressing the housing crisis, advancing equity, and creating more inclusive communities in Connecticut.

- **Bill History.** The Housing Committee held a public hearing on the bill and passed it. The bill was then referred to the Planning and Development Committee, which passed a joint favorable substitute.

**H.B. 6633.** An Act Concerning a Needs Assessment and Fair Share Plans for Municipalities to Increase Affordable Housing

- **Bill Summary.** The bill mandates the evaluation of the overall demand for affordable housing across the state. It assigns specific portions of this need to planning regions and municipalities while also requiring each municipality to create fair share plans. In our testimony, we supported the bill for several reasons. Firstly, Connecticut faces an affordable housing problem that disproportionately impacts low and middle-income families as well as households of color. Secondly, when compared to the United States as a whole, a more significant percentage of households in Connecticut are housing cost-burdened. Thirdly, increasing the availability of affordable housing units brings about numerous advantages, such as enhancing the quality of life for low- and middle-income families, promoting local economic growth, and reducing public expenses. Ultimately, these benefits contribute to the overall economy. Lastly, besides improving housing affordability, implementing a fair share policy would positively impact economic growth and job creation, which have long been priorities for Connecticut policymakers.

- **Bill History.** The Housing Committee held a public hearing on the bill and passed a joint favorable report. A section of the bill, which will require state government to conduct an affordable housing needs assessment for Connecticut and allocate the calculated need to each municipality, passed as part of S.B. 998, the housing omnibus package. The data produced by and the process of conducting this analysis will support future efforts to increase the availability of affordable housing in all towns across the state.
H.B. 6666. An Act Expanding Renters’ Rights

- **Bill Summary.** The bill would raise the maximum civil penalty for housing code violations to $1,000, cap the maximum security deposit at one month’s rent, and subject the rental of certain owner-occupied rental units to state laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation or civil union status. In our testimony, we expressed our support for the bill. Our primary contention was centered around the proposal to raise the maximum fine for housing code violations from $250 to $1,000, a measure we firmly believe will safeguard tenants' rights and enhance landlord accountability regarding the upkeep of their properties to meet safety and sanitation standards. The current fine of $250 is meager, resulting in a concerning trend where many landlords opt to pay the fine rather than undertake necessary and consistent maintenance, consequently perpetuating hazardous living conditions for tenants. To substantiate our argument, we provided compelling examples of notable cases demonstrating a repetitive pattern of neglect by prominent landlords. We contend that the existing $250 maximum fine fails to adequately ensure landlords provide their tenants with the safe and high-quality housing they deserve. Moreover, we underscored the critical issue of limited municipal resources, with insufficient staff capacity to conduct thorough inspections of the numerous local rental properties that may potentially harbor housing code violations. In light of this, we strongly recommend amending the bill to include a provision that ties the maximum housing code violation fine to inflation, thereby safeguarding the fine's impact from being diminished over time, as has occurred over the past two decades.

- **Bill History.** The Housing Committee had a public hearing and passed a joint favorable report. The House then referred it to the Judiciary Committee, which also passed a joint favorable report. The provisions in this bill to raise the maximum housing code fine and prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or civil union status passed the House and Senate as part of S.B. 998.

H.B. 6708. An Act Concerning the Security Deposit Guarantee Program

- **Bill Summary.** Among other changes, the bill would extend eligibility for the security deposit guarantee program to residents making less than 80 percent of the state median income and reduce the amount of support provided per recipient. The bill also appropriates $10 million to administer the program. In our testimony, we strongly supported this bill, highlighting its potential to address homelessness and housing instability by assisting a larger number of Connecticut renters in covering their security deposits for new apartments. We underscored the particular challenges faced by low-income households as they confront historically low rental vacancy rates and escalating rents in our state, with some landlords demanding up to two months’ rent as security deposits. We emphasized that expanding eligibility and increasing funding for the Security Deposit Guarantee Program is an investment in our communities and a significant step toward building a more equitable Connecticut. Finally, we reiterated that this bill could improve the lives of countless
individuals and families throughout the state by providing greater access to affordable housing.

- **Bill History.** The Housing Committee held a public hearing and passed a joint favorable report. The main components of this bill passed the House and Senate as part of **S.B. 998**.

**H.B. 6781.** An Act Addressing Housing Affordability for Residents in the State

- **Bill Summary.** The bill aims to improve access to adequate housing for Connecticut's residents. This would include an increase in allowable fines for housing code violations, measures for tenant protection, tenant screening fees and how eviction records are used, the development of fair share plans, funding for affordable housing, promotion of housing security, and changes to real estate conveyance taxes for large investors. Our testimony strongly supported this bill, emphasizing several key elements. Firstly, regarding housing code fines, we applauded the proposed increase to $2,000, highlighting the inadequacy of the current maximum fine of $250 per violation. We stressed that the insufficiency of the current penalties to deter violations resulted in many tenants being trapped in unsafe living conditions. Secondly, we expressed our support for provisions in the bill relating to walk-throughs of rental units, tenant screening fees, and the disclosure of tenant rights. We underscored how these measures would enhance tenant protections against unjust practices by landlords. Thirdly, we emphasized the significance of rental assistance and housing access. We backed the bill's aim to make it illegal for landlords to discriminate against tenants based on eviction history beyond the past five years. Additionally, we supported efforts to expedite the processing of rental assistance applications, implement a unified application for rental assistance and vouchers, and require programs to accept such applications. We argued that these provisions would reduce barriers many voucher program recipients face in utilizing them effectively. Fourthly, we expressed our support for the substantial investment of over $27 million in our state's homelessness services, rental assistance, diversionary programs, and flexible housing programs. Furthermore, we endorsed the proposed $5 million grant program to fund regional housing inspection programs through councils of government, as well as the allocation of $75 million to facilitate the creation of housing in hotels, malls, and office buildings in non-distressed municipalities. Fifthly, we recommended amending the bill to mandate, rather than allow, municipalities to collect natural person property ownership information. We highlighted other aspects of the bill that called for a task force to explore expanding sewer capacity, as this would contribute to broadening housing options across Connecticut. Lastly, we drew attention to other components of the bill related to the development of more affordable housing.

- **Bill History.** The Housing Committee held a public hearing on the bill and passed a joint favorable substitute. Many of the provisions of this bill were included in **S.B. 998**, which
passed both the House and Senate. The provisions that passed include: raising the maximum civil fine for violations of local housing codes from $250 to $2,000; requiring landlords to offer pre-occupancy walkthroughs; limits on rental application fees; limits on late charges for overdue rent; an expansion of the security deposit guarantee program; requiring standardized rental agreements and housing code violation forms; explicitly expanding allowable municipal identification disclosure requirements for landlords; incentives for landlords to rent to tenants with participating in rental assistance programs; removing certain eviction records from the Judicial Department Website; incentivizing workforce housing development; and requiring the publication of payment standards for rental assistance programs.

H.B. 6890. An Act Concerning Qualifying Transit-Oriented Communities

- **Bill Summary.** The bill establishes a framework under which municipalities' access to certain discretionary state grant programs would be tied to whether they create a transit-oriented development district with zoning regulations that allow for more dense housing construction. In our testimony, we strongly supported this bill, emphasizing its potential to enhance access to affordable and diverse housing, alleviate the severe housing shortage, mitigate escalating rents, expand housing options for families, and stimulate economic growth. To begin, we brought attention to the pressing issue of housing affordability in our state and argued that prioritizing transit-oriented development is crucial for effectively tackling the housing crisis. We further contended that transit-oriented development benefits the economy as a whole and contributes to reducing housing costs. Moreover, we underscored the positive impact of transit-oriented development on Connecticut's transportation infrastructure. Lastly, we stressed how transit-oriented development would enhance the overall appeal of living in Connecticut.

- **Bill History.** The Planning and Development Committee held a public hearing on the bill and passed a joint favorable substitute bill. Part of this bill passed as part of S.B. 998. The part that passed statutorily establishes the Office of Responsible Growth, which previously existed only by executive order, and giving it specific responsibilities related to the promotion of housing growth and land-use planning.


- **Bill Summary.** The bill aims to promote fair and equitable housing opportunities in every community in the state. It includes measures such as supporting workforce housing, providing grants for environmentally friendly housing upgrades with a focus on environmental justice, limiting winter evictions, and creating a pilot program for temporary housing for individuals experiencing homelessness. In our testimony, we voiced our support for the bill, highlighting several elements within the legislation and proposing some
amendments. First and foremost, we underscored the crucial importance of reinstating the rent stabilization portion of the bill, which had been previously removed. Amidst unprecedented rent hikes, protecting those in rental properties from unwarranted rent increases is paramount. Second, we strongly endorse the provisions prohibiting evictions during winter and establishing limits on late rental and tenant screening fees. Third, we firmly supported workforce housing development, emphasizing the indispensable role that the legislature must play in effectively addressing exclusionary zoning barriers to achieve this goal. Moreover, we wholeheartedly supported the proposed investment of $200 million annually for five years to retrofit and upgrade deed-restricted affordable housing in environmental justice communities, recognizing the immense benefits it would bring countless households residing in underinvested neighborhoods. Fourthly, we enthusiastically backed the proposal to create housing code violation complaint forms in English and Spanish, making it more accessible for tenants to address neglected home repairs with municipal housing enforcement agencies. We also strongly recommended expanding housing code violation forms to include additional languages, ensuring inclusivity for residents whose primary language may differ from English. Fifthly, we firmly supported the provisions in the bill that empower municipalities to require the disclosure of natural person ownership of rental property. We further proposed amending the bill to mandate, rather than simply allow, municipalities to collect natural person property ownership information. Lastly, we wholeheartedly supported the provisions in the bill for a pilot program aimed at providing temporary housing for individuals experiencing homelessness. We emphatically urged sufficient funding to be allocated to ensure that the pilot program benefits a significant number of individuals facing homelessness in Connecticut.

- **Bill History.** The Housing Committee held a public hearing on the bill and passed a joint favorable substitute. The Senate referred the bill to the Appropriations Committee, which gave the substitute a joint favorable report. Some of the provisions of this bill were included in **S.B. 998**, which passed both the House and Senate. The provisions that passed include: limits on late charges for overdue rent; limits on rental application fees; requiring standardized rental agreements and housing code violation forms; explicitly expanding allowable municipal identification disclosure requirements for landlords; incentivizing workforce housing development; and requiring the publication of payment standards for rental assistance programs; and creating a program to provide temporary housing to individuals experiencing homelessness. $125 million in funding for the program to support renovations for multifamily housing in environmental justice communities was also included in the bond package that passed this session.

S.B. 906, An Act Concerning Housing Protections for Victims of Family Violence

- **Bill Summary.** The bill would prohibit landlords from discriminating against or taking adverse action against tenants because they have been victims of family violence. In our
testimony, we wholeheartedly supported the bill to prohibit landlords from discriminating against or taking adverse action against tenants who have been victims of family violence. We underscored the significance of this bill as it recognizes the fundamental need to provide a secure and supportive living environment for individuals who have experienced family violence. We shed light on the unfortunate reality that many victims of family violence face discrimination from landlords who refuse to rent to them or attempt to evict them based on unjust stigmas. This discrimination creates immense challenges for survivors in finding and maintaining suitable housing, further exacerbating their vulnerability. We firmly concluded that by safeguarding victims from such discriminatory practices and ensuring their equal access to housing opportunities, the bill would play a pivotal role in breaking the cycle of violence and empowering survivors to rebuild their lives. We emphasized that providing a safe and stable place to live is a basic human right and a crucial step toward fostering healing, recovery, and long-term well-being for victims of family violence.

- **Bill History.** The Housing Committee held a public hearing on the bill.

**S.B. 907.** An Act Concerning Fair Rent Commissions

- **Bill Summary.** The bill would require towns with more than 10,000 residents (lowered from the existing requirement of 25,000) to establish Fair Rent Commissions. In our testimony, we supported the bill as a necessary step to address unfair rent increases and ensure tenant protection from unjust housing conditions. We highlighted how the housing crisis in our state has left many tenants struggling with excessive rent hikes and neglectful landlords. We explained that requiring more towns to establish fair rent commissions would create an impartial body to promote equity in the housing market. We expressed confidence that these commissions would safeguard tenants and hold landlords accountable, fostering a fair and just environment.

- **Bill History.** The Housing Committee held a public hearing on the bill

**S.B. 909.** An Act Establishing a Right to Housing

- **Bill Summary.** The bill would establish a right to housing for the state, which would require state agencies to consider this right when making decisions and attempt to serve residents facing housing insecurity when possible. In our testimony, we reiterated our support for the bill, emphasizing that housing is a fundamental human right. We firmly expressed our confidence that this legislation would bring us closer to turning this principle into a tangible reality. We highlighted the essential nature of safe housing and stressed the importance of setting a right to housing as a vital goal. Despite recognizing the potential costs associated with such a measure, we firmly expressed our belief that every resident in our state deserves a place they can call home.
• Bill History. The Housing Committee held a public hearing on the bill.

S.B. 985. An Act Incentivizing Housing Production

• Bill Summary. The bill would require towns that choose to collaborate with the Connecticut Municipal Redevelopment Authority (MRDA) to adopt zoning regulations that allow for more dense housing construction in development districts near transit stations or downtowns. In our testimony, we wholeheartedly endorsed the bill, recognizing its potential to drive future growth, prosperity, and equity within our state. Firstly, we drew attention to the severe housing shortage in Connecticut, highlighting the detrimental impact on our economy, workforce, and families due to high prices and limited job growth. We emphasized that without new housing, these challenges will persist. Secondly, we expressed our support for Governor Lamont's prioritization of allocating funds to communities that actively promote inclusive, transit-oriented housing expansion. We proposed that the funding for the Connecticut Municipal Redevelopment Authority, tied to the establishment of Housing Growth Zones, should be directed towards financing affordable housing units in eligible municipalities, among other initiatives. Lastly, we acknowledged that while the bill's provisions for loosening zoning regulations are crucial, they may not automatically translate into increased housing development. To address this, we suggested that the bill go a step further by providing direct funding to municipalities based on the number of housing units constructed within each city or town, incentivizing tangible progress in housing availability.

• Bill History. The Planning and Development Committee held a public hearing on the bill and passed a joint favorable substitute bill. This bill was included in the state budget.

S.B. 996. An Act Concerning Housing Development in the State, Establishing a Housing Authority Resident Quality of Life Improvement Grant Program and a Housing Choice Voucher Task Force and Requiring the Disclosure of Certain Natural Person Ownership Interests in Real Property

• Bill Summary. The bill would create a grant program to provide housing authorities to fund improvements to residential buildings, establish a task force to study the federal Housing Choice Voucher program, and allow municipalities to require that nonresident landlords that operate through business entities provide certain identifying information about the people who control the business entity to the municipality. In our testimony, we supported this bill, recognizing its potential to empower local and state governments to hold absentee landlords accountable and ensure the prompt and lawful resolution of maintenance and safety issues at rental properties. We urged the Committee to consider amending the bill to make the disclosure of natural ownership a requirement rather than an optional provision for municipalities, encompassing the majority of non-owner-occupied rental housing. To address concerns regarding the privacy of property owners, we recommended that the law
include safeguards to prevent the public availability of any collected addresses, thereby striking a balance between transparency and privacy considerations. By enacting these measures, the bill will contribute to protecting tenants’ rights and improving rental housing conditions across the state.

● **Bill History.** The Housing Committee had a public hearing and passed a joint favorable report. The Senate then referred it to the Appropriations Committee, where it also got a joint favorable report. The bill then passed the Senate. Language similar to the provisions in this bill regarding landlord identification disclosure requirements passed the House and Senate as part of **S.B. 998**.

**S.B. 1049.** An Act Concerning Payment Standards and Applications for the Federal Housing Choice Voucher Program

● **Bill Summary.** The bill would require housing authorities that administer tenant-based rental assistance programs to post payment standards (the maximum monthly assistance for families in the voucher program). In our [testimony](#), we expressed our support for the bill, emphasizing its potential to alleviate the barriers many recipients of voucher programs face when attempting to utilize their vouchers effectively. Specifically, we highlighted the significance of the provision that mandates public housing authorities (PHAs) to publicly disclose the value of their available housing vouchers and establish a statewide voucher waiting list. We argued that these measures would protect tenants and provide renters with a clearer understanding of the available housing assistance options and streamline the process of securing such support. By implementing these requirements, we posited that the bill could enhance access to and utilization of housing vouchers, ultimately benefiting individuals and families needing affordable housing.

● **Bill History.** The Housing Committee held a public hearing and passed a joint favorable report. The main components of this bill passed the House and Senate as part of **S.B. 998**.
Policy Priority: Safe and Healthy Communities

A fourth major policy priority this legislative session was to ensure that all of Connecticut’s residents live in safe and healthy communities. These are communities where families thrive together, young people are fully engaged in school, and where young people who engage in risky behavior get the services they need in their communities.

We had several major legislative successes on this front. Again, however, it’s important to note that some of the language in these bills may have changed in the final days of their respective debate, prior to enactment. As such, please make sure to read the statute language to understand the full impact of the new laws:

- The budget expands funding for services for at-risk young people by providing additional funding for alternatives to incarceration, outreach services, youth service bureaus and juvenile review boards, mobile crisis intervention services, and community programs to reduce gun violence.

- The budget expands access to healthcare and support services for vulnerable young people by raising the Medicaid eligibility age for young people without legal documentation to 15 and by passing a comprehensive bill to increase resources and support services for young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

- Policymakers passed bills to reduce barriers to reentering the community after incarceration by ensuring individuals have identification when they leave carceral facilities and by ensuring that people convicted of very serious crimes they committed before the age of 21 have an opportunity for parole hearings.

- Policymakers codified proposals to more humanely care for young people charged and convicted of adult crimes by redesigning the commissary system at the Manson Youth Institute to be more equitable and by updating a plan to move young people out of the care of the Department of Correction.

- Policymakers took steps to ensure school discipline is transparent and appropriate by requiring that school districts and law enforcement memorandum of understanding documents are publicly available and that school districts have tools beyond suspensions and expulsions to intervene when young children have high behavioral needs.

We also had some legislative defeats that we will work to address next session:

- In the shadow of exiting the Juan F. Consent Decree, policymakers did not pass policies and funding to better support children and families at-risk or in the care of the child welfare
**system, including expanding the age at which young people with foster system involvement can access higher education funding and expanding cash assistance for families caring for relative children. The lean Department of Children and Families budget will result in service cuts. Policymakers did provide funding to extend the age at which young people in foster care have legal representation.**

- **Multiple pieces of legislation to treat incarcerated adults more humanely were significantly pared down**, including a bill that would limit the use of strip searches and the bill to extend parole eligibility hearings to individuals with long sentences who committed crimes as young adults.

For a more comprehensive overview of our efforts to ensure that all of Connecticut’s residents live in safe and healthy communities, below are the bills that we testified on this legislative session:

**H.B. 5001. An Act Concerning Resources and Support Services for Persons with an Intellectual or Developmental Disability**

- **Bill Summary.** The bill proposes to provide support and services for persons with intellectual disability by ameliorating wait lists for Medicaid waiver programs and implementing policies designed to maximize federal and state resources to provide support and services. In our testimony, we explained that Connecticut has been on a downward spiral. After ranking 6th best among states in 2007 for its efforts to serve people with an intellectual or developmental disability (I/DD), we ranked 31st in 2019. Critically, Connecticut was ranked “43rd for promoting independence” and 46th for “serving those in need”. HB 5001 is a vital measure to correct our course and ensure that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are adequately supported. The solutions proposed in HB 5001 are targeted to address Connecticut’s biggest shortcomings. Only 14.7% of US adults with an I/DD are employed, highlighting the lack of support (and not a lack of ability) for people with an I/DD to engage in the workplace. In sections 1 and 2, HB 5001 would ensure that there are better employment opportunities, trainings, and accommodations as well as research on how to improve our systems of transportation to increase employment opportunity.

- **Bill History.** The Human Services Committee held a public hearing on the bill and passed a joint favorable change of reference to the Appropriations Committee. The House and Senate unanimously passed an amended version of this bill.

**H.B. 6563. An Act Increasing the Age of Eligibility for the Postsecondary Education Funding Program Offered by the Department of Children and Families and Establishing a Pilot Program to Provide Financial Assistance for the Postsecondary Education of Adopted Youth.**
- **Bill Summary.** The bill proposes to increase the age for eligibility for the postsecondary education funding program offered by the Department of Children and Families from the age of twenty-one to twenty-six years of age and the age at which a postsecondary education program must be completed from the age of twenty-three to twenty-eight years of age. In our testimony, we explained that not all young people with a history in DCF care will use extended vocational and higher education tuition waivers and services. However, a little extra time is precisely what some youth need to heal, mature, and flourish. For young people who left DCF care at 18 and now want to return to school, young people in DCF care who pressed pause on school while they managed the trauma of living through a pandemic, and young people in DCF care who decided not to go to college amidst a pandemic, this bill could provide another chance to finish their education or vocational training. Finally, for young people in DCF care with dreams of being a doctor, lawyer, or professor, this bill could be the one thing they need to make that dream a reality.

- **Bill History.** The Higher Education Committee held a public hearing on the bill and passed a joint favorable substitute and then the Children Committee also held a public hearing and passed a joint favorable substitute. The bill did not receive a vote in the Appropriations Committee.

**H.B. 6576: An Act Strengthening Support for Grandparents and Other Nonparent Relatives Raising Children**

- **Bill Summary.** The bill, which our testimony strongly supported, sought to increase support for nonparent relatives raising children outside of the formal foster care system. It would increase financial support for these families by raising the amount of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) dollars a family can receive to the amount allowable under federal law or the amount a family would receive from the Department of Children and Families (DCF) in foster care payments, whichever is lower. It would also extend supports provided by Family Resource Centers (FRCs) to nonparent relatives raising children and supports provided by the Department of Children and Families’ parent education and support centers. In Connecticut, over a quarter of grandparents who live with their grandchildren are raising those grandchildren, and in many other families aunts, uncles, older siblings, and even cousins are providing kinship care for children in their families without becoming part of the formal foster care system. We estimate that these families may receive almost $1,000 less per month in State support than families under the purview of DCF.

- **Bill History.** The bill received unanimous approval from the Aging Committee, but it did not receive a vote in the Appropriations Committee. While the legislature did not include an increase in TANF for families providing kinship care outside of the formal foster care
system, it did lengthen the amount of time a family may claim temporary assistance from 21 months to 36 months.

**H.B. 6616. An Act Concerning Expansion of Husky Health Benefits to Those Ineligible Due to Immigration Status**

- **Bill Summary.** The bill states that “on and after June 1, 2024, the Commissioner of Social Services shall, within available appropriations, provide state-funded medical assistance to any person twenty-five years of age and younger, regardless of immigration status, (1) who, except for immigration status, otherwise would qualify for HUSKY A, C or D, as defined in section 17b-290 of the general statutes, and (2) who does not otherwise qualify for the Children's Health Insurance Program, or an offer of affordable, employer-sponsored insurance, as defined in the Affordable Care Act, as an employee or a dependent of an employee.” In our testimony, we supported the bill, explaining that immigrants make incredible contributions to our state and disproportionately serve in the riskiest jobs, but are consistently punished and denied access to human rights such as basic health care because of their legal status. Immigrants in our state pay roughly $145 million in state and local taxes every year, $253 million in federal taxes. Immigrant taxpayers help fund programs, such as HUSKY health and therefore should have coverage. They are also valuable members of our communities that have shouldered a public health crisis with virtually no state support. Most of all, all residents, irrespective of immigration status, deserve high-quality healthcare without worrying about a lack of insurance coverage.

- **Bill History.** The Labor and Public Employees Committee held a public hearing on the bill and then passed a joint favorable substitute (JFS) change of reference sending the bill to the Appropriations Committee, which passed the JFS bill. The **FY 24 and FY 25 budget** includes language supporting expanding state-funded medical assistance to any child 15 years of age and younger, regardless of immigration status, who otherwise would qualify for Medicaid coverage.

**H.B. 6875. An Act Concerning the Issuance of a State Identification Card or Motor Vehicle Operator’s License to a Person being Discharged from a Correctional Facility**

- **Bill Summary.** The bill sought to ensure that people reentering their communities after leaving a carceral facility have a driver’s license or photo identity card in-hand before they exit the facility. It requires that the Department of Correction (DOC) and the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) begin the process of renewing an ID or issuing a new ID 24 months prior to release for incarcerated people with long sentences and that 13 months prior to release all processes will be expedited. Additionally, the bill requires the DOC to report to the Judiciary Committee on issued identification annually. We submitted testimony in
support of this bill, arguing the necessity of photo identification—specifically driver’s licenses—for reentering individuals to find and maintain employment.

- **Bill History.** The bill received unanimous support from both the Judiciary Committee and the Appropriations Committee. The House of Representatives voted in favor of an amended version of the bill that makes implementation easier for DOC. The amendment delays the implementation date of the bill by one year, and some of the changes reduce the likelihood of incarcerated people obtaining the kind of identification they need to thrive upon exiting incarceration by allowing the Commissioners to act within available appropriations and removing the requirement that DOC gives people access to an initial driver’s license. It also restricts which people are able to access this help to those whose sentences are more than a year but less than life. The Senate unanimously supported this language.

**H.B. 6888. An Act Concerning Juvenile Justice**

- **Bill Summary.** The bill included many suggestions from the policy recommendations package put forth by the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC). The bill mandated that police divert young people would would be charged with simple trespassing, creating a public disturbance, disorderly conduct, and stealing an item whose value is less than $500 to Juvenile Review Boards (JRBs) instead of arresting these young people; if the young people did not engage in needed services the JRB could send the youth to the court for a delinquency hearing. It additionally requires development of a plan for the mandatory pre-arrest diversion of low-risk young people for first or second-time minor offenses. The bill added young people and others with lived experience to the voting membership of the JJPOC and provided funds for child care and transportation for these members. It requires the Department of Corrections (DOC) to create a commissary implementation plan that is more equitable for young people in their care and that helps to teach young people positive behaviors, and it requires the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) of the Judicial Branch to create a plan to remove people under age 18 from DOC’s custody. It charges the JJPOC and state agencies to develop a reentry success plan for youth that is built off of best practices and expands upon Connecticut’s current successful reentry programs. Finally, it updates the Alvin W. Penn Act to include when police stop pedestrians in research regarding racial inequity in policing in Connecticut. We gave testimony in support of this bill and included a few friendly amendments, the largest of which were to extend funding for Connecticut’s Reentry Welcome Centers whose funding through the American Rescue Plan Act expires in June of 2024, to ban the use of chemical restraints, and to raise the minimum age of criminal legal system involvement for children from 10 to 14.

- **Bill History.** The Judiciary Committee voted this bill out of committee with substitute language that included technical language. The substitute language did not include any of the amendments suggested in our testimony. The bill received some bipartisan support in
committee, but it was far from unanimous. The bill then went to the Appropriations Committee, who voted in favor of substitute language that removed funding for child care and transportation for members of the JJPOC with lived experience. The bill once again received some bipartisan support from members of the Appropriations Committee. An amended version of this bill passed in the last two minutes of the legislative session. The amended bill includes language requiring an implementation team to develop a plan for prearrest diversion of low-risk children and a plan for automatic prearrest diversion for children who engage in a first or second nonviolent misdemeanor offense, it broadens JJPOC membership to included representatives with lived experience and members of the Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan tribes, and it requires the Judicial Branch to update the implementation plan to move young people incarcerated at MYI out of DOC custody and to CSSD custody. The FY 24 and FY 25 budget includes the requirement for DOC to create and implement an equitable commissary plan.

H.B. 6889. An Act Concerning Children from Families with Service Needs

- **Bill Summary.** The bill, proposed by the House Republicans, would have reversed many recent reforms to the way Connecticut’s criminal legal system addresses crimes committed by young people. Most notably, it would have made young people whose crimes classify as “serious juvenile offenses” automatically transfer to the adult court system, which would have expanded the number of young people incarcerated in adult facilities that provide fewer therapeutic services and educational services that are not appropriate for young people with special needs. It would also have reinstated the Families with Service Needs (FWSN) program whereby the courts intervened when young people committed status offenses, which are behaviors that are criminalized for children (such as running away from home or skipping school) but not for adults. This would have increased youth contact with the criminal legal system, which increases risk of further contact, and created significant cost to the Judicial Branch which would have needed to contract services for needs better met through the children’s behavioral health system. Additional changes the bill proposed include holding court hearings in the area where young people committed a crime rather than near their homes, which would have made it difficult for families to participate in court proceedings; removing the ability for Superior Court judges to release pre-trial youth to their parents in certain cases; allowing the courts to require restitution payments from parents in addition to young people, which would have placed additional financial burdens on families that are disproportionately financially burdened; and explored utilizing victim impact panels for proceedings involving young people. Our [testimony](#) opposed most proposals within this bill and offered suggestions on language we could support, such as utilizing restorative justice circles instead of victim impact panels.

- **Bill History.** The Judiciary Committee unanimously voted in favor of substitute bill language that would have reinstated FWSN and added young people who exhibit habitual
truancy from school and defiance of school rules to the list of young people who could be referred to court for a FWSN hearing. The bill then went to the Appropriations Committee, where it did not receive a vote.


- **Bill Summary.** The bill proposes to require the development of a juvenile diversionary program and make changes to the statute concerning youth service bureaus. In our testimony, we explained that appropriate services ought to be matched with the needs of young people and their families and that in order for this to be done, programs must have mechanisms to monitor and improve quality when young people’s needs are not being met. This bill seeks to do just this. Requiring the Department of Children and Families to establish performance standards for YSBs and submitting a biennial state-wide performance report to the JJPOC on diversion of young people under 18 creates accountability to promote better consistency use of diversion and in services. In order to strengthen this part of the bill, we suggest including ways that youth and family voices are part of identifying measuring outcomes. We also suggest including reporting on the myriad services provided by YSBs beyond diversion, such as behavioral health, employment, prosocial development, prevention, etc.

- **Bill History.** The Appropriations Committee held a public hearing on the bill and passed a joint favorable.


- **Bill Summary.** The bill sought to expand the possibility of parole eligibility when serving a lengthy sentence to people who committed a serious crime when they were younger than 25. Under this bill, a person serving between 10 and 50 years is eligible for a hearing before the State of Connecticut Board of Pardons and Parole after serving 12 years or 60 percent of the sentence (whichever is greater), and a person serving more than 50 years is eligible for a hearing before the Board of Pardons and Parole after serving 30 years. We testified in support of this bill, citing neuroscience research that the brain continues developing the neural circuitry that reduces reactivity to “false alarms” of threat. Washington D.C. and the state of Washington have both already enacted similar legislation extending the possibility of parole to those serving life sentences for crimes they committed as young adults.

- **Bill History.** The bill passed through the Judiciary Committee mostly along party lines. The Senate amended the bill to reduce the age at which eligible people committed the crime from under 25 to under 21. The amended language passed the Senate mostly along party lines.
The House further amended the language to apply to convictions prior to October 1, 2005, and the Senate re-voted in favor of this amended language.

**S.B. 1008.** An Act Concerning Legal Representation for Children in Certain Proceedings in the Superior Court.

- **Bill Summary.** The bill sought to clarify existing statute regarding children’s legal representation within child abuse and neglect cases heard by the Superior Court to ensure that when children are appointed a lawyer for a proceeding, representation continues for the entire duration of the proceeding. We submitted testimony supporting this bill, as it would ensure that young people who stay in the care of the Department of Children and Families beyond the age of 18 continue to have legal representation, which can be critical for young people navigating issues surrounding housing, higher education, and healthcare.

- **Bill History.** While this bill originated in the Children’s Committee, after its public hearing it was sent to the Appropriations Committee, where it received unanimous support. This language was included within S.B. 2, which passed both the House and the Senate unanimously.

**S.B. 1093.** An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee Concerning Education

- **Bill Summary.** The bill sought to help shrink Connecticut’s school-to-prison pipeline through the use of less exclusionary discipline and greater in-classroom support. First, it would require school districts with high levels of exclusionary discipline to submit improvement plans to the State Department of Education (SDE), which would allow SDE to provide feedback and support to struggling districts and improve district accountability for policies and practices. Second, it would create a cap on class sizes, which would decrease teachers’ need to rely on exclusionary discipline policies as a classroom management tool and improve the learning environment for students. It would require SDE to provide districts with tools to help screen students for suicide risk, and it would require the ten largest school districts to report to SDE on students placed in alternative educational programs. Finally, it would create a committee to monitor and advise on ways to further reduce the use of suspension and expulsion for preschool through second grade students and recommend interventions for very young students exhibiting violent or sexual behaviors as an alternative to using suspension and expulsion. In our testimony, we expressed support for these proposed policies and concern about the understaffing of SDE and school districts being an impediment to implementing these policies.

- **Bill History.** The Education Committee passed substitute language for this bill that removed language capping class sizes and added language requiring school districts to utilize a
suicide screening tool recommended by SDE when students exhibit mental health distress. The committee vote for this bill fell mostly along party lines. The Senate added the language surrounding expulsions and suspensions of very young students into S.B. 1 and passed that language around party lines. S.B. 2, which passed both the House and the Senate unanimously, included language to provide suicide risk assessments at school-based health centers and public schools.

S.B. 1095. An Act Concerning School Resource Officers

- **Bill Summary.** The bill, which we strongly supported in our testimony, would require that when school districts partner with local law enforcement agencies to assign a School Resource Officer (SRO) to a school, school districts are required to post the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the district and law enforcement agency about the roles and duties of the SRO on the school district website. It would require MOUs to include information about duties and procedures surrounding restraining students, use of firearms, and school-based arrests. In addition to serving traditional law enforcement functions, many SROs also teach students about the law and serve as mentors to students. This bill would allow schools to assign non-law-enforcement duties often completed by SROs to other qualified school personnel. We believe this bill would increase clarity and transparency surrounding the roles and responsibilities. Clear, transparent MOUs can reduce the misuse of SROs by school personnel, protect student rights, and improve relationships between SROs, school staff, and the school community.

- **Bill History.** The Education Committee passed substitute language for this bill out of committee. The substitute language removed the clause specifying that other qualified staff could fulfill duties done by SROs, as this is already allowable. The vote in committee fell mostly along party lines. The language from this bill was rolled into S.B. 1 and passed in the Senate along party lines.

S.B. 1196. An Act Concerning Procedures of the Department of Correction Relating to Strip Searches and the Transfer of Persons who are Incarcerated Between Correctional Facilities.

- **Bill Summary.** The bill sought to make two important changes to Department of Correction (DOC) procedures. First, it would require DOC to notify a victim of a crime whenever a person convicted for perpetrating that crime moved to a lower security carceral facility. Second, it sought to raise the standard at which DOC could conduct a discretionary strip search of a person in their custody from a standard of reasonable suspicion that the person was concealing contraband to a standard of probable cause that the person was concealing contraband. We testified in strong support of this bill and requested that legislators consider extending the “probable cause” standard to young people in the care of the Judicial Branch, the police, or school officials. Strip searches are dehumanizing, and for people that have
experienced sexual violence as well as for developing children, they can be deeply traumatic.

- **Bill History.** The bill received strong support during the public hearing, though DOC opposed the bill. The Judiciary Committee unanimously passed substitute language that maintained the original language pertaining to transfers but changed the language pertaining to strip searches to require a study of the feasibility of utilizing body scanning machines instead of strip searches and DOC’s needs to implement use of those machines as well as a requirement for DOC to issue a request for proposals to purchase the machines. The Senate unanimously voted in favor of this substitute language, and the House overwhelmingly supported the bill. [PA 23-12](#) is currently awaiting the Governor’s signature.