

# 2019 Year in Review



CHRIS   
**MURPHY**  
U.S. SENATOR FOR CONNECTICUT

# SENATOR CHRIS MURPHY

## 2019 END OF YEAR REPORT

Senator Chris Murphy began his second term as the junior United States Senator for Connecticut on January 3, 2019. Throughout his nearly seven years in the U.S. Senate, Chris has worked tirelessly on issues that matter most to Connecticut families. The following report outlines efforts Chris led in the U.S. Senate and the work he did for Connecticut residents over the past year.

### SENATOR CHRIS MURPHY - 2019 BY THE NUMBERS



Traveled across the state, hosting **126** town halls, roundtables, and listening sessions with Connecticut residents.



Introduced or cosponsored over **300** pieces of legislation, including bills and resolutions.



Completed his **4th Walk Across Connecticut**: five days, 100 miles, through 21 towns, talking to hundreds of people and holding town halls along the way.



Responded and reached out to over **444,000** Connecticut residents through calls, emails and letters.



Returned over **\$1.6 million** to residents, including owed Social Security payments, veterans' benefits, tax refunds, and other savings from federal agencies.



Helped **4,335 Connecticut residents** work through federal issues and get their owed benefits.



Held over **25** regional council meetings with over **490** Connecticut community leaders, business owners, advocates, and stakeholders.



Hired **49 students as paid interns** in his Hartford and Washington, D.C. offices.

## Standing Up For Connecticut Values

Chris has worked hard to find common ground on the issues that matter most to Connecticut residents, while also working across the aisle on a number of bills. In 2019, Chris introduced and co-sponsored over 300 bills that protect Americans from gun violence, strengthen and expand our health care laws, boost innovation and manufacturing, strengthen our national security, and more. Here are a handful of bills that Chris authored and introduced in 2019:

- ✔ **Background Check Expansion Act**  
Legislation to expand federal background checks to all gun sales. Following mass shootings this summer in Ohio and Texas, Chris worked in a bipartisan way with Democratic and Republican Senators and the White House to find a commonsense path forward on expanding background checks.
- ✔ **Choose Medicare Act**  
Legislation that gives every individual who is not already eligible for Medicaid or Medicare the opportunity to enroll in Medicare as an individual, and also gives every employer the ability to purchase Medicare for their employees.
- ✔ **Mental Health Parity Compliance Act**  
Bipartisan legislation to improve transparency and accountability to help ensure consumers have access to mental health and substance use services included in their health care plans.
- ✔ **Closing the College Hunger Gap**  
Legislation that would mandate the federal government collect data on food and housing insecurity on college campuses and connect eligible students with resources like SNAP to combat food insecurity
- ✔ **Strength in Diversity Act**  
A measure to promote racial and socio-economic diversity in schools. The legislation creates a federal grant program to support voluntary, community-driven strategies to increase diversity in schools.
- ✔ **Student Loan Forgiveness for Farmers and Ranchers Act**  
Legislation to create a loan forgiveness program for beginning farmers and ranchers, as well as other groups that are underrepresented in farming such as women, veterans, and minorities.
- ✔ **Social Security Caregiver Credit Act**  
Legislation to provide retirement compensation in the form of Social Security credits to individuals who left the workplace to care for their loved one.
- ✔ **Super Pollutants Act**  
Bipartisan climate bill that aims to reduce emissions of short-lived climate pollutants, including methane and black carbon, which are some of the most aggressive contributors to global warming.
- ✔ **Workforce Mobility Act**  
Bipartisan legislation to limit the use of non-compete agreements that negatively impact American workers.

## Protecting Communities from Gun Violence

Since the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Chris has been a leading voice in the U.S. Senate to reform our nation’s broken gun laws. The first piece of legislation he introduced in the 116th Congress was the *Background Check Expansion Act*, legislation to expand federal background checks to all gun sales.

Throughout the year, Chris helped lead the fight to pass common sense gun safety legislation. He hosted a town hall earlier this year in partnership with students from March for Our Lives and survivors of gun violence, and consistently gave a voice to all those who have been impacted by gun violence, especially families from Connecticut, during his regular “Voices of Victims” speeches on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

Following the spate of horrific mass shootings this summer in Ohio and Texas, Chris teamed up with Republican Senator Pat Toomey (Pa.) and Democratic Senator Joe Manchin (W.Va.) to negotiate directly with President Trump on a bipartisan path toward expanding federal background checks on firearms. Although talks have stalled, Chris is still at the table ready to negotiate a solution that will save lives.

This year, Chris helped secure \$25 million to fund gun violence research in this year’s Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill for next year.

Chris also cosponsored a number of other bills to address gun violence, including legislation crafted specifically to respond to Connecticut priorities:

- *Ethan’s Law*, a federal bill to honor the memory of Ethan Song, a Guilford teenager who accidentally shot himself with an unsecured gun, and require the safe storage of firearms
- *Equal Access to Justice for Victims of Gun Violence*, legislation to ensure that the gun industry, including manufacturers, sellers, and interest groups, can be held liable when it acts with negligence or disregard for public safety



## Improving Health Care

As a member of the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, Chris has fought to protect people with pre-existing health conditions and strengthen

protections in the *Affordable Care Act*. Chris has also worked across the aisle to champion mental health reforms, receiving the Bob Savage Recovery Advocate of the Year Award by the Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery (CCAR). His other health care work centered around delivering needed resources to combat the opioid epidemic; lowering prescription drug prices; and tackling rising medical debt. Chris regularly holds listening sessions across Connecticut to give residents a chance to share their health care stories, which informs his decision making in Washington.

**US Sen. Murphy defends the Affordable Care Act at roundtable discussion in Bristol**

### Taking on the Trump Administration's ACA Sabotage Efforts

This year, Republican Attorneys General and the Trump administration continued to back *Texas v. United States*, a lawsuit to undo the *Affordable Care Act* through the courts. If the lawsuit prevails, it would overturn the *Affordable Care Act* in its entirety, causing 130 million Americans, including 522,000 people in Connecticut living with a pre-existing condition, to lose their health care. To combat this, Chris offered an amendment to the *Lowering Health Care Costs Act* during a HELP Committee markup requesting the Trump administration provide information for states and Congress to better understand the potential consequences if the lawsuit is successful. Chris has sounded the alarm on this dangerous lawsuit through speeches on the U.S. Senate floor, digital outreach and roundtables in [Connecticut](#). In addition, Chris started a [Share Your Story](#) campaign asking constituents to write about what it would mean to them if the *Affordable Care Act* was gutted through the courts.

**MURPHY.SENATE.GOV/SHAREYOURSTORY**

### A Health Care Plan That Gives Americans Choice

Chris, along with Senator Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), reintroduced the *Choose Medicare Act*, legislation to give every individual who is not already eligible for Medicaid or Medicare the opportunity to enroll in Medicare, the most popular form of health care in the country. The bill also gives every employer the ability to purchase Medicare for their employees, and would increase competition and choice.

### Improving Mental Health

Chris teamed up with Republican Senator Bill Cassidy (La.) to introduce the *Mental Health Parity Compliance Act of 2019*. Their legislation would improve transparency and accountability to help ensure consumers have access to mental health and substance use treatment services included in their plans. It would also strengthen compliance with mental health parity laws by requiring issuers or plans to submit comparative analyses upon request from federal oversight agencies. The two senators authored the *Mental Health Reform Act* which was signed into law by President Obama in 2016.

### Protecting Our National Security and Putting Forward a Framework for a Progressive Foreign Policy

Chris became active in national security affairs because he believes his first responsibility is to keep Americans safe. As a member of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Chris has been a leading voice in the U.S. Senate for a progressive foreign policy. He has argued that progressives must clearly articulate when military force is justified, advocate for America to recommit to our security and economic alliances, and focus on building up non-military capabilities for dealing with challenges around the world that cannot be solved by military force alone. He outlined the new capabilities needed for progressive foreign policy this year in a [speech](#) at the Council on Foreign Relations and in an op-ed in [the Atlantic](#). Chris has also worked hard over the years to reassert Congress's role in U.S. foreign policy and being a check on presidential war-making powers.

An example of Chris's leadership on matters of national security is his work to end the U.S. participation in the Yemen War. Since 2015, Chris has been a vocal critic of unchecked U.S. support for Saudi Arabia, and especially the Saudi-led war in Yemen. This conflict has led to devastating humanitarian consequences and a security vacuum

that has empowered terrorist groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda to grow stronger in the region. Chris offered a resolution with Independent Senator Bernie Sanders (Vt.) and Republican Senator Mike Lee (Utah) to end U.S. involvement in the Saudi-led war. The U.S. Senate successfully voted for their bipartisan resolution to end hostilities pursuant to the War Powers Act of 1973. The U.S. House of Representatives passed the resolution shortly after, making it the first time since the law passed in 1973 that the U.S. Congress sent a resolution to the President of the United States pursuant to the law.

After President Trump declared a national emergency and bypassed Congress to approve arms sales to Saudi Arabia, Murphy partnered with Republican Senator Todd Young (Ind.) to offer a privileged resolution to force a vote on arm sales and other security assistance to Saudi Arabia.

### Fairly Compensating Student Athletes for Their Work

As both a lifelong college sports fan and a champion of civil rights, Chris decided in 2019 to break Congress's silence on the increasingly unfair treatment of college athletes. That's why he released "*Madness, Inc.*" – a series of three reports that considered a range of problems within college athletics. The reports examined the nature of amateurism, how programs fail to provide a full education to their student-athletes, and the long-term health consequences that student-athletes face. To Chris, this is a civil rights issue. The majority of the profits from big athletic programs go to mostly white executives, while most of the football and basketball players at these programs are black.

#### **Sports Illustrated**

#### **U.S. Senator Chris Murphy Hopes to End the Madness and Pay College Athletes**

In the midst of the NCAA tournament, U.S. Senator Chris Murphy is taking action to address the issue of paying college athletes.

The three reports gained traction across the nation, receiving praise from athletes, coaches, and even Republicans in Congress. This led to the announcement of a bipartisan working group featuring Chris, Republican Senators Mitt Romney (Utah), Marco Rubio (Fla.) and David Perdue (Ga.), and Democratic Senator Cory Booker (N.J.). Going forward, this group will be working together with the help of collegiate partners, athletes, and experts to address the range of issues facing college athletics, including drafting bipartisan legislation to help fairly compensate student athletes.

### Supporting Connecticut Jobs

In the Senate, Chris has been focused on growing jobs in Connecticut and boosting our economy.

#### Championing U.S. Manufacturing

The manufacturing industry plays a critical role throughout Connecticut communities, creating new jobs and accelerating the state's economic recovery. Today, Connecticut's thousands of manufacturers account for 10% of the state's jobs and 87% of the state's total exports. As a member of the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee, Chris has fought hard to bring federal money back to Connecticut. He's helped Connecticut's manufacturers like Electric Boat, Sikorsky, and Pratt & Whitney, and their hundreds of suppliers, secure significant federal projects, growing good-paying jobs in our state.

Specifically, this year, he:

- Secured \$8.4 billion for Virginia-class submarines and \$2.6 billion for the Columbia-class program produced at Electric Boat in Groton, including an additional \$123 million to expand submarine supplier development;
- Secured \$9 billion for 90 Joint Strike Fighters across the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps, powered by the F-135 engine manufactured by Pratt & Whitney in Middletown;
- Secured \$1.4 billion for 73 Black Hawk helicopters, \$800 million for 6 CH-53K Heavy Lift Helicopters, and \$884 million for 12 of the Air Force's Combat Rescue Helicopter made by Sikorsky in Stratford; and an additional \$72 million to accelerate development of future helicopters; and
- Secured \$72.3 million to replace Pier 32 at the New London Submarine Base to ensure the base remains at the highest level of readiness.

Since coming to Congress, Chris has been a critic of the loopholes in our current Buy American laws that allow federal agencies to skirt the law and give federal contracts to foreign companies instead of U.S. manufacturers. Last year, Chris partnered with Republican Senator Rob Portman (Ohio) in introducing the *BuyAmerican.gov Act*, legislation that would establish a centralized online hub to increase transparency and ensure federal agencies prioritize the purchase of American-made goods in compliance with existing law. Earlier this year, President Trump heeded his call and registered BuyAmerican.gov as an official government URL, creating a one-stop shop for U.S.



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manufacturers looking for transparency surrounding our Buy American laws, which will help them win federal contracts.

Buy American laws help companies in Connecticut like RADeCo, whose CEO reached out to Chris last year with his concerns about U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) purchases of Chinese-made unmanned aircraft drones that were being used to spy on America. DoD heeded Chris's call and give him confirmation that the Department would end the practice. Chris secured additional commitment in this year's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which included his provision banning the use of Chinese-made drones by DoD.

Chris also introduced the *Workforce Mobility Act* with Republican Senator Todd Young (Ind.), which would limit the use of non-compete agreements that negatively impact American workers, which he believes are economic and innovation killers. To hear from people in Connecticut about how non-competes hold them back, Chris asked for people to [share their stories](#) online.



Chris Murphy's free-market pitch against non-competes

### Investing In Workers

Chris is focused on making sure workers have the skills they need to get good-paying jobs. In Connecticut, there is a need for manufacturers to fill the thousands of manufacturing jobs with skilled workers. Chris fought to secure several major grants for new training programs in Connecticut, including a \$6 million grant to set up the Eastern Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative. The success of the pipeline led Chris to invite then-Secretary of Labor Alexander Acosta to eastern Connecticut to showcase the program. Acosta accepted Chris's invitation, and following his visit in the spring, through the Scaling Apprenticeship Through Sector-Based Strategies Program, the U.S. Department of Labor awarded an additional \$8 million to colleges, universities, and other industry partners in Connecticut to develop in-demand skills for workers to fill these manufacturing jobs.

### Fostering Innovation

Chris believes entrepreneurship and innovation are building blocks for a strong economy and is working in Congress to support innovators in Connecticut. There are over 60,000 technology companies in Connecticut that employ around 200,000 people.

This year, Chris reintroduced the *Helping Angels Lead Our Startups (HALOS) Act*, bipartisan legislation that would support small businesses by removing burdensome restrictions from individuals who want to invest in startups and help create jobs.

Each month, Chris highlights Connecticut innovators and entrepreneurs through his “Innovator of the Month.” Companies this year include Torigen Pharmaceuticals, a Farmington startup focused on providing personalized cancer immunotherapies to the veterinary market, and Kubtec Medical Imaging, a company in Stratford that produces transformative 3D breast specimen imaging systems that enable medical professionals to provide the best quality of care for patients.

#### THE REGISTER CITIZEN

“Connecticut is home to the best manufacturers and it’s because of companies like Franklin Products. I got to see firsthand the innovative work being done in their Torrington plant, and I want to applaud them for their decades of commitment to Connecticut manufacturing. My office is here to help in any way we can,” said Murphy.

JULY 18, 2019

### Supporting Connecticut Farmers

In April, the U.S. Department of Agriculture released a new Census of Agricultural Data, which showed that approximately 30% of Connecticut farmers are beginning farmers. Supporting this new generation of producers is critically important to Connecticut’s economy and rural communities. That is why Chris introduced the *Student Loan Forgiveness for Farmers and Ranchers Act* to help beginning farmers stay in farming. This bill would let beginning farmers, as well as women, veterans, and minority farmers, get their student loans forgiven if they work in farming for ten years.

In addition, Chris continues to use his seat on the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee to direct resources towards Connecticut farming. This includes securing language supporting agriculture research efforts at both UCONN and the University of New Haven. Chris also helped secure a \$10 million increase in the Agriculture & Food Research Initiative (AFRI), which funds a broad array of agricultural research, including a \$15.7 million increase in the line item that funds the Natural Resource Conservation Services staff in Connecticut and across the country. Finally, Chris secured full funding

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for the Floriculture and Nursery Research Initiative, which supports Connecticut's nursery and horticulture industry.

Chris has also been a leading voice against President Trump's rollbacks to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). He led multiple Connecticut delegation letters on how the numerous regulatory rewrites that the Trump administration is proposing would be disastrous for Connecticut. Going forward, Chris will keep fighting to protect SNAP from attacks that hurt recipients and growers. He also [released a video](#) encouraging people to write in comments to the federal government about what these cuts would mean to them and their loved ones.

### Preserving and Protecting Long Island Sound

Connecticut's economy depends on a vibrant, healthy Long Island Sound. The Sound generates billions of dollars from tourism, fishing, shipping, and recreation. This year, Chris reintroduced *the Living Shorelines Act* to create a new grant program for nature-based shoreline protection programs known as living shorelines. This federal grant program would send money to towns along the Sound that are working on environmentally friendly projects to fortify against future storms and rising sea levels. In addition, he worked with Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) to draft a bill to create a new "Genius Prize" to fund the development of innovations that support advancements in truly biodegradable packaging as well as detection and cleanup of marine debris. This bill was eventually included as a package of other bipartisan proposals, called the *Save our Seas 2.0 Act*, that will address marine debris across our oceans.

In his time in the Senate, Chris has used his seat on the Appropriations Committee to triple funding for the Sound and make critical investments to protect its coastline and our environment from pollution.

This year, he helped secure:

- \$21 million for the Long Island Sound Geographic Program, \$7 million above last year's levels;
- \$74 million of the National Sea Grant College Program, an increase of \$6 million from last year. Chris leads a bipartisan letter every year supporting this program, which is a major source of funding for the Connecticut Sea Grant program located at UCONN Avery Point;

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- \$15.25 million for Aquaculture programs, which will, in part, go to fund the Milford Lab. Chris also secured language addressing hiring shortages at Milford Lab;
- Language supporting the expansion of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System. Connecticut has a pending application to join this system;
- \$1 million to create a new shellfish researcher position within the Agricultural Research Service;
- \$29.8 million for the National Estuary Program, an increase of \$3 million from last year. Of this, \$662,000 will go towards supporting the Long Island Sound, which is also an increase from previous years;
- \$39 million for the Integrated Ocean Observing System Regional Observations, which provides approximately \$400,000 in funding for the Long Island Sound Integrated Coastal Observation System;
- Language funding a new interagency research study on kelp and how it removes carbon dioxide from oceans;
- \$9.2 million for BEACH Act Grants, of which some funding goes to monitor water quality at Connecticut beaches; and
- \$172.3 million for EPA Nonpoint Source Program Grants, a \$2 million increase from last year, to protect the Sound from agricultural runoff and other forms of pollution.

Finally, Chris secured a provision in the final appropriations bill to block the sale of Plum Island for the next fiscal year. Plum Island is in eastern Long Island Sound and formerly housed a federal animal disease research lab. The 840-acre island is a critical habitat for over 200 bird species, many of which use the island as part of their North-South migration along the Atlantic flyway, and is the most important haul-out site for grey and harbor seal in southern New England. It is also home to 40 rare and protected plant species, as well as sea turtles, marine eelgrass beds, and numerous fish populations. Years ago, a federal appropriations bill mandated that the government sell the Island, ignoring the potential ecological and conservation concerns. Chris's provision will, at least temporarily, protect the island from development.

### **Improving Education and Fighting for Children and Families**

Chris has become one of the Senate's leading critics of the current state of higher education in America. As the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee begins to debate a reauthorization of the *Higher Education Act* (HEA), Chris released a detailed

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policy paper outlining new proposals on how students and taxpayers can get a better return on their investment by expecting outcomes around completion, value and access.

The proposal:

- Uses multiple metrics to identify schools that aren't graduating enough students or whose students are not able to pay down their loans;
- Suggests differentiating between schools that are investing in student success and schools that are siphoning tuition dollars away from student instruction, punishing bad actors while creating a grant program to help struggling schools that are trying to improve;
- Ensures that schools cannot backslide by admitting fewer low-income students to meet these goals; and
- Supports strong consumer protection safeguards like the improving the cohort default rate, strengthening the 90/10 rule, and banning mandatory arbitration.

After the Government Accountability Office released a report on college food insecurity, Chris went directly to students in Connecticut to hear firsthand about their experiences with food insecurity on college campuses. This led to Chris releasing a report detailing the problems students face, such as food and housing insecurity and how these challenges impact their ability to succeed in school. Chris then teamed up with Connecticut's 5th District Congresswoman Jahana Hayes on the *Closing the College Hunger Gap Act*, legislation that would require the Department of Education to collect data on food and housing insecurity on college campuses and connect eligible students with resources like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

This year marks the 65th Anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the landmark Supreme Court decision that ruled racial segregation of children in public schools unconstitutional. Chris believes that diversity in our schools benefits all students. Earlier this year, he worked with Ohio Congresswoman Marcia Fudge on the *Strength in Diversity Act of 2019*, legislation that would promote racial and socio-economic diversity in schools by creating a federal grant program to support voluntary, community-driven strategies to create diversity in schools.

In addition, Chris has been working hard to support children and working families. This year, he introduced the *Child Care Flex Spending Act*, which would allow families to set aside more funding pre-tax to help pay for child care. Families in Connecticut spend around 13% of their income on child care and single parents can spend almost half. In addition, Chris is working hard to increase funding for programs like Head Start on the Senate Appropriations Committee. Affordable, high-quality child care can make all the difference in a child's life and is critical to helping working families make ends meet.

## Supporting Our Troops and Honoring Our Veterans

In 2017, Chris introduced the *Honor Our Commitment Act* after learning that over 500,000 combat veterans were ineligible for mental health care. The legislation, which was signed into law

### **The Day**

**Murphy, in Hartford, continues to put pressure on VA to treat vets with other than honorable discharges**

by President Trump in 2018, requires the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to, for the first time, provide mental and behavioral health care to hundreds of thousands of at-risk combat veterans and sexual assault victims who received Other-than-Honorable (OTH) discharges, often for actions related to service-connected trauma.

Following the law's passage and reports that the VA was continuing to deny veterans with OTH charges mental and behavioral health services, Chris led a group of senators in calling out the VA to comply with the law.

Building on this work, Chris introduced the *Veteran Housing Opportunity and Unemployment Support Extension (HOUSE) Act*, which allows those with OTH discharges to participate in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program. The bill expands access to vital HUD-VASH case management services, connecting chronically homeless veterans with the resources they need to find employment and housing.

As a member of the Senate, Chris has the honor of nominating promising young women and men to West Point, the U.S. Naval Academy, the U.S. Air Force Academy, the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, and the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. This year, he nominated 35 Connecticut students.

## Assisting Puerto Rico

Connecticut is home to more than 275,000 people of Puerto Rican descent. As a member of the Appropriations Committee, Chris has been fighting in the Senate for congressional funding to help the island rebuild. Following the Trump administration's slow-walking of billions of dollars of congressionally-appropriated aid to Puerto Rico,

Chris secured an amendment to withhold funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development's CFO's office until the department published a notice to

allocate Puerto Rico disaster mitigation funds. Chris also visited Puerto Rico earlier this year to meet with the new governor, elected officials, and representatives from agencies responsible for dealing with rebuilding the island.

**Hartford Courant**

Murphy blasts Trump for delay in disaster relief funds for Puerto Rico

On the legislative front, Chris partnered with Senator Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) to introduce the bipartisan *ELEVATE Act*, which will ensure states like Connecticut receive the federal funding necessary to provide high-quality instruction to all students learning English. This bill will correct a flawed funding formula the U.S. Department of Education uses to allocate money to states by fully capturing the number of K-12 students who relocate to the mainland from Puerto Rico.

### Transportation

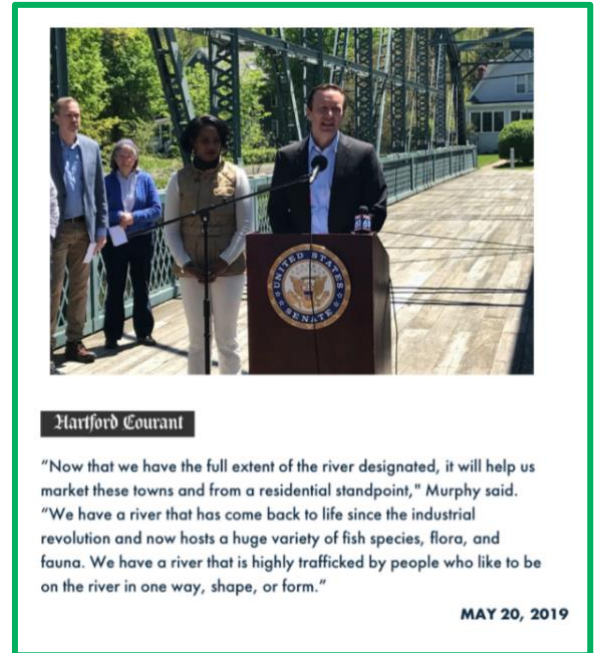
Amtrak's Northeast Corridor (NEC) is the backbone of Connecticut's transportation infrastructure, transporting over 800,000 passengers every day and contributing more than \$50 billion annually to the national economy. But the state of good repair backlog, causing delays and track closures, is a constant concern. As a member of the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee, Chris called for an increase of funding for the NEC and pressed U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao on the administration's proposed cuts to Amtrak. Using his seat on the Appropriations Committee, Chris helped secure \$700 million for NEC Grants, a \$50 million increase from 2019.

In addition, as the Senate works to reauthorize the *FAST Act*, which provides federal surface transportation funding, Chris solicited input from all Connecticut towns, councils of governments, and the state department of transportation to identify specific priorities to ensure that Connecticut residents have a safe commute. Chris also solicited direct input from our Transportation Advisory Council to ensure that all of Connecticut's priorities are heard and represented in the reauthorization process.

In July, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee passed *America's Transportation Infrastructure Act of 2019*. The bill authorizes \$287 billion over five years for highway funding, an increase of over 27 percent from *FAST Act* levels. The bill includes provisions to improve road safety and repair aging bridges. The bill would also authorize \$10 billion in competitive grants for climate resiliency projects.

## Land Conservation

In February, Chris was proud to support the bipartisan *Natural Resources Management Act*, a package of more than 100 public lands, natural resources, and water bills. Among other important provisions, this legislation included his bill to give the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook a federal "Wild and Scenic" designation to protect and fund conservation efforts for the river that runs through ten towns: Avon, Bloomfield, Burlington, Canton, East Granby, Farmington, Granby, Hartland, Simsbury, and Windsor. The upper portion of the Farmington River was given protected status in 1994. The designation of the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook capped a community-driven, decade-long effort led by Chris and local advocates to preserve and protect the river for generations to come.



The *Natural Resources Management Act* also funds the new Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Wild and Scenic designation, which covers parts of southeastern Connecticut. Subsequently, as a member of the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee, Chris secured \$3.576 million for the Wild and Scenic Rivers program, ensuring that these new designations will get federal dollars to support conservation efforts for the first time. The *Natural Resources Management Act* also included a permanent authorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), a critical tool to promote land conservation in Connecticut and around the country. After securing a permanent authorization of LWCF, Chris is working to secure permanent funding for the program. He has advocated for the *Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Permanent Funding Act*, which would automatically fund the LWCF at \$900 million annually, removing the requirement that funds to the LWCF be annually appropriated. The bill passed favorably out of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and Senator Murphy will fight for its passage on the Senate floor.



## Helping Connecticut Homeowners Dealing with Crumbling Foundations



Crumbling foundations continue to be a burden to families throughout central and eastern Connecticut. Chris has worked with the towns affected by the crisis to address the issue and support the state's efforts to fund critical testing and repairs.

In February, Chris re-introduced his bill, *The Aid to Homeowners with Crumbling Foundations Act*, that would provide \$100 million over five years from HUD to states like Connecticut that have created non-profit crumbling foundations assistance funds to repair damage to residential structures due to pyrrhotite.

In March, \$480,000 of federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program funding was approved for testing crumbling foundation in Ellington, Stafford, and Vernon. In April, Chris pressed HUD Secretary Dr. Ben Carson on his proposal to eliminate the CDBG program, citing the program's importance to towns dealing with the crumbling foundations crisis. As a result of his advocacy, the CDBG program was funded at \$3.425 billion in Fiscal Year 2020 – \$100 million above the Fiscal Year 2019 enacted level of funding for the program.

In December, Chris secured \$1.5 million in funding for the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to conduct research on the effects of the mineral pyrrhotite on concrete aggregate. NIST, which is part of the Department of Commerce, is the leading federal expert in cement and concrete standards. This federal funding will help NIST to develop a cost-effective and standard testing method for at-risk homes and other structures for the presence of the mineral pyrrhotite.

Finally, this year, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) – a independent, nonpartisan watchdog agency that works for Congress – began its study of the crumbling foundations issue plaguing Connecticut. Chris is the highest ranking Democratic member of the Appropriations Subcommittee that funds the GAO. The GAO study is a result of his amendment to a Fiscal Year 2019 spending bill directing the agency to execute the study. The study will analyze the current and future economic effects of the problem for Connecticut while also analyzing the potential tools the federal government could use to address the many issues stemming from the problem. The GAO study is scheduled to be completed in 2020.

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