

2020

SENATOR CHRIS MURPHY END OF YEAR REPORT



LISTENING TO AND WORKING HARD FOR CONNECTICUT

Throughout this challenging year, Senator Chris Murphy has fought hard on behalf of the people of Connecticut to help the country battle COVID-19 and provide much-needed relief to families, teachers, health care workers, and businesses.

In addition to fighting the pandemic, Murphy also proposed constructive solutions to dealing with systemic racism in our schools, fought to protect and improve access to health care, and continued to articulate a bold foreign policy agenda to keep us safe at home and abroad. The following report outlines efforts Murphy led in the U.S. Senate and the work he did for Connecticut residents over the past year.

2020 BY THE NUMBERS



- Traveled across the state, hosting over **130 town halls, roundtables, and virtual listening sessions** with Connecticut residents.
- Introduced or cosponsored over **120 pieces of legislation**, including bills and resolutions.
- Responded and reached out to over **550,000 Connecticut residents** through telephone town halls, calls, emails, and letters.
- **Returned \$1,319,016.43 to residents**, including owed Social Security payments, veterans' benefits, tax refunds, and other savings from federal agencies.
- **Helped over 4,601 Connecticut residents** work through federal issues and get their owed benefits - including COVID-19 relief support through stimulus checks and PPP loans.

TACKLING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Senator Murphy ensured that people could count on his office for timely, accurate information on the virus, rapidly evolving public health recommendations and the federal government's response.

At the start of the pandemic, when there was fear and confusion about what the next day would bring, he posted a nightly video update and sent daily email blasts to communicate the most up-to-date information on the virus and congressional action.

When Congress passed the COVID-19 relief bills, he held telephone town halls in every congressional district to answer questions, released breakdowns of new funding coming to the state, and published tailored information on how Connecticut residents, towns, and companies could access new assistance.

As Congress debated additional relief bills, Murphy convened meetings with Connecticut constituencies hit hard by the pandemic – like frontline workers, small businesses and schools – and hosted regular conversations with Connecticut experts on topics like the need for personal protective equipment (PPE) for health care workers and rising rates of food insecurity.

CONSTITUENT OUTREACH

- 71 proactive outreach emails, with an average reach of 380,000 people
- 14 Facebook Live Town Halls on COVID-19 and racial justice
- 30 nightly COVID-19 videos to update residents on public health guidelines and progress in Washington
- 8 COVID-19 Telephone Town Halls, reaching over 35,000 people



Through these conversations, Senator Murphy heard loud and clear from Connecticut residents that Congress needed to take action to contain the pandemic and provide economic relief. Murphy authored and introduced the following measures to make sure that the U.S. was leading with other nations to develop a safe and effective vaccine, providing economic relief to workers, families, small businesses, and schools, and producing the necessary PPE for our health care workers.

SENATOR MURPHY INTRODUCED:

THE REBUILDING MAIN STREET ACT

would expand the existing work share program to allow employers to share their payroll costs with the federal government, while receiving grant help to cover other fixed costs like rent and needs for reopening safely like cleaning and protective equipment.

THE MAIN STREET EMERGENCY GRANT PROGRAM

would allow small businesses to apply for grants through the Treasury Department to cover fixed costs like payroll and rent.

THE TREAT ACT

would provide health care providers with needed flexibilities during the pandemic by allowing temporary licensing reciprocity for all licensed and certified practitioners or professionals in all states for all types of services (in-person and telehealth).



THE MEDICAL SUPPLY CHAIN EMERGENCY ACT

would force the president to implement the Defense Production Act of 1950 and federalize the manufacturing and distribution of scarce in-demand medical supplies.

THE MEDICAL SUPPLY TRANSPARENCY AND DELIVERY ACT

would require the president to utilize his authorities under the Defense Production Act to mobilize a federal response to the pandemic through an equitable and transparent process.



THE SERVE AND CARRY ACT

would give additional funds to restaurants to provide food to those in need and allow people to use their SNAP benefits at restaurants.

THE SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES DURING COVID-19 ACT

introduced with Senator Hassan of New Hampshire and Senator Van Hollen of Maryland, would provide \$11 billion for state grants under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), \$1.2 billion for early childhood education programs, and \$55 million under the Assistive Technology Act, ensuring that children with disabilities, their teachers, and their families have the support they need to maintain educational opportunities for our most vulnerable students.

Hartford Courant

U.S. Sen. Christopher Murphy: Coronavirus is raging. Congress needs to end the gridlock and help small businesses.



As COVID-19 crisis grows, Murphy, Larson press Trump to use emergency powers to fight scarcity of medical supplies

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress passed multiple relief bills to help Americans respond to the public health emergencies and economic downturn. Most recently, on December 21st, Congress passed legislation that provides \$900 billion in COVID-19 relief. The bill includes \$600 direct payments to individuals, \$325 billion in aid to small businesses, increased federal unemployment benefits, \$69 billion for vaccine distribution, testing, tracing, and other health care needs, \$82 billion for K-12 schools and colleges, \$25 billion in rental assistance, and an increase in SNAP benefits.

PUSHED FOR A GLOBAL PANDEMIC RESPONSE

In addition to addressing the domestic implications of COVID-19 and helping businesses, families, and educators across Connecticut, Murphy also took a stand in pushing for a coordinated response to defeat COVID-19 everywhere while developing new tools to prepare for the next pandemic if and when it arrives at our shores. Murphy was vocal about the Trump administration's decision to pull out of the World Health Organization – a decision that hurt U.S. credibility abroad, empowered Chinese influence in the organization, and hampered our ability to fight COVID-19.

THE GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY ACT

is bipartisan legislation directing the president to create the Global Health Security Agenda Interagency Review Council to implement the Global Health Security Agenda, an initiative launched by nearly 30 nations to address global infectious disease threats.

THE GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY AND DIPLOMACY ACT

is bipartisan legislation to advance the global health security and diplomacy objectives of the United States, improve coordination among the relevant federal departments and agencies implementing United States foreign assistance for global health security, and more effectively enable partner countries to strengthen and sustain resilient health systems and supply chains with the resources, capacity, and personnel required to prevent, detect, mitigate, and respond to infectious disease threats before they become pandemics.

FUNDED:

Global Vaccine Distribution: \$4 billion to respond to COVID-19 globally, including for worldwide vaccine procurement and delivery.

Global Health Security: \$190 million to accelerate the capacity of targeted countries to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious disease outbreaks.

PASSING LEGISLATION TO HELP CONNECTICUT

This year, Senator Murphy passed numerous pieces of legislation and, as a member of the Appropriations Committee, secured increased funding for programs important to Connecticut. Here are a handful of Murphy's legislative accomplishments:

PASSED: Weir Farm National Historical Park Redesignation Act – Legislation to change Weir Farm's National Park designation from a National Historic Site to a National Historical Park. The change will better reflect Weir Farm's size and importance, while improving recognition of the site and preserving its cultural landscape.

PASSED: Save Our Seas 2.0 Act – Bipartisan legislation to combat marine debris, which included language drafted by Senators Murphy and Murkowski to allow for the establishment a Genius Prize to fund the development of materials to replace single-use plastic and innovations that remove and prevent plastic waste.

PASSED: Food Allergy Safety, Treatment, Education, and Research (FASTER) Act – Introduced and passed the FASTER Act, which requires the labeling of sesame on food products. This bill will help the millions of Americans with sesame allergies more safely purchase food.

PASSED: Law Enforcement Identification Act – After President Trump deployed thousands of unidentified police officers across American cities this summer, Senator Murphy authored and passed this legislation that requires unidentified law enforcement officers and members of the Armed Forces to clearly identify themselves and their agency or service while they are engaged in crowd control or arresting individuals involved in civil disobedience in the United States in the final FY2021 NDAA.

REPEALED: Mandate that the government sell Plum Island – Secured language repealing the mandate the government sell Plum Island to the highest bidder. As a result, the island's open spaces and wildlife are more likely to be protected. In addition, Senator Murphy also secured \$18.9 million in new funding to help clean up the island.

FUNDED: Gun Violence Research – After securing first time ever funding for gun violence research last year, Senator Murphy secured another \$25 million for gun violence research within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). In addition, he secured a \$6.7 million increase in funding for the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) Initiative grants to help strengthen background checks.

FUNDED: Amtrak Northeast Corridor – Secured \$700 million in funding to support operations and improvements along the Northeast Corridor and \$1 billion in additional support through Amtrak in the end of year spending bill.

FUNDED: Long Island Sound – Secured \$30.4 million in funding for habitat conservation and water quality improvements in Long Island Sound through the EPA's Long Island Sound geographic program. This is a nearly 50% increase from last year's levels.

FUNDED: Coast Guard Museum – Secured \$5 million for the Coast Guard museum in New London.

FUNDED: Highlands Conservation Act – Secured \$10 million for Highlands Conservation Act, one of the most significant federal investments of conservation funding in Connecticut that allows state and municipal land trusts to conserve thousands of acres of land.

FUNDED: Defense Appropriation Bill – Added over \$5 billion additional dollars towards aerospace and defense manufacturing in Connecticut that kept tens of thousands of manufacturers on the job by increasing producing demand, expanding funds for Workforce Development Programs, and authorizing advanced payments to small and medium aerospace and defense businesses.

FUNDED: Murphy School Diversity Initiatives – Secured \$109 million for magnet schools, an increase of \$2 million from last year, as well as language repealing the only remaining prohibition on using federal funds for transportation to carry out school desegregation efforts. This means more flexibility for magnets as well as school districts more broadly to fund efforts to increase school diversity.

IMPROVING HEALTH CARE

As a member of the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, Murphy has fought to protect people with pre-existing conditions and strengthen protections in the Affordable Care Act. Murphy continues to push his legislation with Senator Merkley of Oregon to create a public option for individuals and employers to buy into Medicare. The Choose Medicare Act would expand access to quality, affordable health insurance and create greater competition in the insurance market. It would also allow Medicare to negotiate for lower drug costs.

His other health care work centered around delivering needed resources to combat the opioid epidemic; lowering prescription drug prices; and tackling rising medical debt. Murphy regularly holds roundtable listening sessions across Connecticut to give residents a chance to share their health care stories, which informs his decision making in Washington.



He continues to push for improved access to behavioral health services, including through better integration of these services with primary care and ensuring health insurance regulators have the strongest tools they need to assess compliance with mental health parity laws. His bipartisan bill with Senator Cassidy of Louisiana, the Mental Health Parity Compliance Act, was signed into law as part of the end of year funding package and will give federal and state regulators the ability to request additional compliance documents from health plans to better ensure that people receive their full behavioral benefits.

FIGHTING THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S SABOTAGE OF OUR HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

This year, as the Trump administration continued its sabotage on the American health system during a global pandemic, Murphy continued to fight on behalf of Connecticut. Murphy opposed the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court, who was seated just in time to hear oral arguments in the Texas v. California lawsuit. The lawsuit, brought by Republican Attorneys General and backed by the Trump administration, seeks to overturn protections for pre-existing conditions for 130 million Americans and health coverage for over 20 million people provided by the Affordable Care Act. Murphy 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, many of which he used in remarks on the Senate floor.



LOWERING THE COST OF HEALTH CARE

Following a series of roundtable discussions in Connecticut over the past two years, Murphy introduced the Strengthening Consumer Protections and Medical Debt Transparency Act. This legislation would put in place standard practices to make sure that health care providers communicate with consumers about any debt that is owed, and alert the consumer of any assistance that they qualify for before debt is sent into collections. The legislation also directs the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to create a public database to collect information from health care providers about their debt collection practices.



FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHTS OF COLLEGE ATHLETES

Over the past two years, Murphy has been a leader in calling for college athletes to be fairly compensated for their labor as well as ensuring college athletes' health, safety, and academic opportunities are protected.



Announced the formation of a bipartisan Senate working group - the group will provide an informal setting for discussions among members, and also with collegiate partners, athletes, and experts who wish to engage lawmakers.

Published an Op-Ed in ESPN with NBA Champion Draymond Green - calling on the NCAA to reform its practices and placing the issue of athlete safety and compensation in the current context of the protests for racial justice across institutions and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Announced a Framework for an Athletes' Bill of Rights - announced the framework for a new college athletes' bill of rights that will advance justice and opportunity for college athletes. The proposal will guarantee fair and equitable compensation, enforceable health and safety standards, and improved educational opportunities for all college athletes.

Wrote a Letter with Senator Cory Booker to NCAA President Mark Emmert - urging the NCAA to take further action to ensure that college athletes are able to access the rights and opportunities they deserve. The letter came in the wake of a report from the NCAA's Board of Governors with recommendations to address changes regarding the ability of college athletes to derive compensation from the value of their name, image, and likeness (NIL).

ADDRESSING RACIAL INEQUITIES IN OUR SCHOOLS

Following the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery this year, Murphy responded by working to address the inequities in our schools that disproportionately push students of color out of school and into the criminal justice system.

Recognizing the disproportionate impact police presence in schools have on Black and Latino students in Connecticut, Murphy introduced the Counseling Not Criminalization in Schools Act, which seeks to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline by shifting how the federal government invests in school safety. The bill prohibits the use of federal funds for maintaining and growing police presence in schools and establishes a \$2.5 billion grant program to help schools hire the counselors, social workers, nurses, and mental health professionals we need to create truly safe and inclusive schools for all students. In response to feedback from constituents, Murphy scheduled a public telephone town hall to dialogue with those who disagreed with his proposal and to address their concerns.



Along with introducing legislation to address the presence of police in schools, Murphy also introduced legislation focused on mitigating the use of force against students in ways that can often cause trauma or put students at risk of injury. The Keeping All Students Safe Act would prohibit the dangerous practices of secluding and restraining students, and the Protecting Our Students in Schools Act would prohibit corporal punishment in schools. Students of color and those with disabilities face these punishments disproportionately, contributing to worse academic outcomes and a greater likelihood students are pushed out of school.



Find out more about Senator Murphy's work
and get in contact with our office at:

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