

2023

SENATOR CHRIS MURPHY A YEAR IN REVIEW





Throughout 2023, Chris traveled across Connecticut to talk to residents about the issues that matter to them the most. He took their stories and feedback down to Washington and worked hard to deliver results. This report outlines the efforts Chris led in the U.S. Senate and the work he did for the people of Connecticut this past year.

2023 BY THE NUMBERS



Introduced or co-sponsored more than 200 pieces of legislation, including 24 bills or resolutions as the lead sponsor



Completed his seventh Walk Across Connecticut: four days, 67 miles, 17 towns, and hundreds of people along the way



Traveled across the state, hosting 139 town halls, roundtables, listening sessions and more with Connecticut residents



Responded and reached out to Connecticut residents through over 529,000 calls, emails, and letters.



Returned \$3,189,384 to constituents, including owed veterans' benefits, Social Security payments, tax refunds, and other savings from federal agencies



Helped more than 8,100 constituents work through federal issues

IMPLEMENTING THE BIPARTISAN SAFER COMMUNITIES ACT

After the horrific shootings in Buffalo, New York and Uvalde, Texas last year, Chris led passage of the first comprehensive piece of gun safety legislation in three decades — the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA). The bill strengthened background checks, narrowed the boyfriend loophole, increased funding for red flag laws, and made historic investments in mental health and support services for students and communities in need.

Gun safety laws save lives, and BSCA is proof of that. In the year since passage:

- The murder rate dropped 12.7% in 2023 compared to 2022
 - 190,000 enhanced background checks and counting have been conducted for buyers under 21
 - 1,800 firearm purchases by dangerous individuals have been denied thanks to the enhanced background check
 - More than 300 defendants have been charged under new BSCA violations for straw purchasing or gun trafficking, and hundreds of firearms have been seized in connection with these prosecutions
 - Community violence intervention programs have received more than \$100 million in additional funding
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For too long, the ambiguous definition of what it means to be “engaged in the business” allowed thousands of unlicensed dealers to sell guns without background checks. BSCA made a small, but significant change to clarify that if you’re selling guns to predominately earn a profit, you are required to conduct background checks.

This prompted a new rule from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) to keep more guns out of dangerous hands that could result in thousands of more background checks being conducted each year, and Chris is working hard to ensure the final rule is as strong as possible.

THE NEXT DECADE FOR THE GUN SAFETY MOVEMENT



BSCA has saved thousands of lives, but there's a lot of work left to do. That's why on the one-year anniversary of BSCA's passage, Chris brought President Biden, elected leaders, and hundreds of advocates from all over the country to Hartford for the Safer Communities Summit — a one-day event to mourn those we've lost, celebrate our victories, and plan the next decade for the gun violence prevention movement.



■ POLITICS

In CT, Joe Biden says the tide has turned on guns in America

Our movement has long pushed for an executive-level office dedicated to the work of gun violence prevention, and this year Chris and Congressman Maxwell Frost introduced legislation to make that a reality. In September, President Biden heeded those calls, establishing the new White House of Gun Violence Prevention.

The New York Times
***Biden Creates Federal Office of Gun
Violence Prevention***

The office will make sure BSCA's full potential is realized, help state, local, and federal agencies work together to enforce gun safety laws, and fund gun violence prevention programs. Chris continues to push for his legislation that would codify the office and ensure ending gun violence remains a top priority no matter who is in the White House.

TACKLING THE FENTANYL CRISIS

No community in Connecticut has been spared by the death and devastation of the fentanyl crisis. As Chair of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security, Chris is focused on doing everything possible to stop the flow of fentanyl into the United States. He secured \$824 million in new funding to make sure the Department of Homeland Security has the resources necessary to keep Americans safe.

These investments will:

- Improve detection and seizure of fentanyl at ports of entry and international mail facilities to prevent entry into the U.S.
- Dismantle smuggling networks by increasing the investigative footprint of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and supporting and expanding cost effective approaches
- Build outbound capabilities to seize currency and firearms heading to Mexico
- Fight fentanyl abroad by dismantling and disrupting transnational criminal organizations trafficking fentanyl and other illicit substances before it reaches the U.S.

Murphy proposes \$1B plan to combat fentanyl coming into U.S.

In addition to more funding, Chris is working to make sure this goal takes a higher priority in the U.S.-Mexico relationship. He traveled to Mexico City to meet with Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador and has convened meetings in Washington with Mexico's ambassador to discuss how the U.S. and Mexico can work together to stop the flow of fentanyl.

Chris also introduced bipartisan legislation that would disrupt the fentanyl trade before the finished product reaches our shores. The Combatting Fentanyl Trafficking from China and Mexico Act would target actors in Mexico and China involved in the production and transit of fentanyl to the U.S. through a combination of sanctions and incentives.



REBUILDING COMMUNITY AND CONNECTION



Americans are feeling lonelier, more disconnected from community, more frustrated with technology, and more powerless in their economic and family lives than ever before. Recent data has shown that more than half of U.S. adults are considered lonely.

The Surgeon General released a public health advisory warning about the harms of social disconnection and isolation, including a nearly 30% risk for premature death. It's a crisis that impacts everyone no matter their race, gender, or political affiliation, and Chris believes government must play a role in solving it.

Chris introduced legislation to establish a national strategy to combat America's epidemic of loneliness and promote social connection in our communities.

The National Strategy for Social Connection Act would:

- Create an Office of Social Connection Policy at the White House
- Require the development of a government-wide strategy to integrate social connection policy across federal departments and agencies
- Issue research-based best practices on how to better engage and connect within our local communities.
- Support continued research at the CDC and improved data on social disconnection and loneliness



Chris led the Addressing Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults (SILO) Act, along with Senator Casey. This legislation would authorize grants and training to support community-based organizations doing the work to reach out to older adults and adults with disabilities at-risk for loneliness, connect them to support systems, and implement strategies to mitigate social isolation.

PROTECTING KIDS



As a parent of one teenager and another soon-to-be teenager, Chris understands how hard it is to be a kid today and how powerless parents can feel. The rise in social media usage among young people has coincided with more children reporting feeling depressed, lonely, and disconnected than ever before. One-third of teen girls have seriously considered suicide, and the numbers are even more devastating for LGBTQ teens.

The New York Times

Algorithms Are Making Kids Desperately Unhappy

By Chris Murphy

Mr. Murphy is the junior senator from Connecticut.

Chris teamed up with a group of bipartisan senators and parents, Senators Brian Schatz of Hawaii, Katie Britt of Alabama, and Tom Cotton of Arkansas, to introduce legislation that would help protect children from the harms of social media and take power back from Big Tech companies.

The Protecting Kids on Social Media Act would:

- Set a minimum age of 13 to use social media apps
- Require parental consent for 13- through 17-year-olds
- Prevent social media companies from using algorithms to feed content to users under the age of 18.

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act also made historic investments to ensure more kids can access mental health care. Millions of dollars went out the door this year, including:

- More than \$185 million for school-based mental health programs
- \$60 million to train more professionals specializing in pediatric mental health
- \$188 million to help school districts hire and train new counselors and support staff



All across the country, LGBTQ kids are targeted by right wing bullies and legislators who espouse hateful rhetoric and try to pass discriminatory legislation. Chris regularly uses his platform as a Senator to stand up for LGBTQ kids and their parents. When Senate Republicans tried to allow schools to deny students lunch if they identify as LGBTQ, Chris took to the Senate floor to call them out and block the effort.

FOX61
NATIONAL POLITICS

Murphy pushes back against Senate Republican resolution that targeted LGTBQ+ kids

DELIVERING DOLLARS FOR CONNECTICUT

Over the past few years, Chris helped pass some really important pieces of legislation, including the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the CHIPS and Science Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act. These bills weren't just a one-time funding boost — they made long-term investments in creating thousands of good-paying jobs, providing an economic boost to communities, and supporting the U.S. manufacturing industry.



Chris has been laser-focused on making sure as many federal dollars as possible are reaching Connecticut. To name just a few examples, he helped secure:

- \$2 billion to modernize Connecticut's rail system and the Northeast Corridor
- \$158 million to repair the Gold Star Memorial Bridge
- \$144 million to expand access to fast, reliable internet
- \$47 million to build a new clean energy facility in Bridgeport
- \$25 million to improve public transit in New Haven
- \$20 million to expand Bradley International Airport
- \$19 million to make roads safer and boost economic development in Northeast Hartford
- \$17 million to transform public transportation and improve public safety in New London
- \$6.5 million to strengthen grid resilience
- \$4.5 million to complete the Norwalk River Valley Trail

MAKING HOUSING MORE AFFORDABLE

In every corner of Connecticut, one of the top challenges facing families, young people, and senior citizens is the high cost of housing. Chris launched a statewide listening tour to hear about the unique housing challenges Connecticut communities are facing, including the rising cost of rent, shortage of housing stock and lack of affordable housing, gentrification, blighted homes and poor housing conditions, and barriers to home ownership.



The housing crisis can't be solved by the federal government alone, but federal housing reform can play a role in making sure more people can afford a place to call home. After gathering feedback from constituents — renters, homeowners, landlords, and people experiencing homelessness — he announced his support for a slate of bills that would begin to address some of their concerns.

Those bills include:

- The Fair Housing Improvement Act: would expand housing protection for low-income individuals and veterans
- The Choice in Affordable Housing Act: would incentivize landlord participation in the Housing Choice Voucher program
- The Family Stability and Opportunity Vouchers Act: would create a new type of housing voucher aimed at ending homelessness among families with children

(contd.)

- The Yes In My Backyard (YIMBY) Act: would encourage localities to eliminate discriminatory and burdensome zoning and land use policies to increase supply of affordable housing
- The Housing Alignment and Coordination of Critical and Effective Supportive Health Services (ACCESS) Act: would direct the Departments of Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Treasury to issue joint guidance on connecting Medicare beneficiaries to housing-related supports and services

SUPPORTING WORKERS

2023 was the year of workers fighting for what they deserve. For too long, American workers have been getting screwed by corporations that care first and foremost about profits and short-term returns. From the UAW to the Starbucks workers, Chris was proud to support the thousands of striking workers across the country.



One of the ways greedy corporations keep wages low and stave off competition is through non-compete agreements. For years, Chris has introduced bipartisan legislation to limit the use of these agreements that negatively impact workers across industries and income brackets. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) this year proposed a new rule to ban non-competes, and Chris is continuing to push for his legislation to codify these protections.

DEFENDING THE RIGHT TO AN ABORTION

In the year since the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, the right wing has ramped up their all-out attack on reproductive rights. While the right to an abortion is still safe in Connecticut, states all across the country are passing draconian abortion bans and targeting women and their doctors. Chris is fighting to keep government out of women's health care and co-sponsored a slate of legislation to protect reproductive rights.

- The Women's Health Protection Act: Guarantee equal access to abortion everywhere by safeguarding abortion rights across the country and halting medically unnecessary restrictions on abortion care
- The Right to Contraception Act: Enshrine into law the right to use birth control—which is under threat after Justice Clarence Thomas suggested the Supreme Court should reconsider its ruling in *Griswold v. Connecticut*
- The Expanding Access to Family Planning Act: Protect access to reproductive health care services—like birth control, cancer screenings and more—by providing a consistent and strong source of funding for the Title X Family Planning Program
- The Freedom to Travel for Health Care Act: Protect the rights of Americans to cross state lines to receive abortion care
- The Let Doctors Provide Reproductive Health Care Act: Protect doctors and ensure that providers in states where abortion remains legal are protected from any efforts to restrict their practice or create uncertainty about their legal liability
- The Convenient Contraception Act: Require private health insurance plans to cover the cost of up to a full-year supply of contraceptive care products



SAFEGUARDING DEMOCRACY

Few things are more important than protecting American democracy and the right to vote. Last year, voters in Connecticut overwhelmingly supported amending the state constitution to allow early voting. Chris called on state legislators to adopt no less than 14 days of early voting and ensure early voting sites are convenient and accessible. The state legislature and Governor Lamont listened to those calls from Chris and others, which will make it easier for more voters to make their voice heard in 2024.

Hartford Courant

U.S. Sen. Chris Murphy: Don't let CT stay an electoral backwater

Trust in the Supreme Court is at an all-time low as Americans watch justices hide their conflicts of interest and accept luxury vacations while seizing every opportunity to roll back racial equality, reproductive rights, and LGBTQ rights. Since 2011, Chris has introduced legislation to require the Judicial Conference to create a code of ethics for Supreme Court justices. This year, the Court took a small step toward restoring public confidence by adopting a binding code of conduct. Chris's Supreme Court Ethics Act would ensure this new ethics code has an enforcement mechanism to hold justices to account.



PRESERVING OPEN SPACES AND LONG ISLAND SOUND



Chris cares deeply about protecting Connecticut’s natural resources — he first became interested in public service after participating in cleanups along the Connecticut River as a teenager. The river’s water quality has come a long way, and protecting it must remain a priority. Chris introduced the Connecticut River Watershed Partnership Act to help federal, state, and local government work together and with organizations on the ground to protect the watershed for future generations to enjoy.

Long Island Sound is more than just an ecological resource and economic asset for Connecticut — it’s a huge part of our state’s identity. This year, the Long Island Sound Study received the most federal funding in a single year — \$61 million — in part thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. To protect the future of the Sound and support shoreline communities, Chris introduced the Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Reauthorization Act, which would unlock \$65 million annually for water quality and shore restoration programs.

The Highlands region is home to hundreds of wildlife species, provides clean water to thousands of people in our state, and gives people a special place to take in Connecticut’s beauty. Thanks to the passage of Chris’ Highlands Conservation Reauthorization Act, Connecticut received \$1.46 million this year to ensure this special area is protected.

IMPROVING SCHOOLS

As a member of the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, Chris is working to make sure regardless of race, zip code, or learning ability, all kids have access to a high quality education. School should be a safe, nurturing place for students to learn. Chris reintroduced his suite of bills to reform school discipline practices and invest in support for students.



Those bills include:

- Keeping All Students Safe Act: Prohibits the use of dangerous seclusion and restraint practices in schools that disproportionately target students of color and those with disabilities
- Protecting Our Students in School Act: Prohibits the use of corporal punishment in all schools
- Counseling Not Criminalization Act: Invests in positive school climates that support all students and address the over-policing of our nation's K-12 schools.

A champion for making classrooms more diverse, Chris secured big funding increases to the Magnet Schools Assistance Program. Thanks to his push, Norwalk Public Schools received \$2.9 million and Capitol Region Education Council received \$3.1 million this year. Chris also reintroduced the Strength in Diversity Act to create a new federal grant program to support voluntary, community-driven strategies that better integrate schools.

Chris fought for more than \$2 billion in the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act to improve learning conditions and make schools safer. This year, Connecticut announced a new \$8.6 million grant program made possible by BSCA to help high-need school districts improve their school climate. Connecticut’s EdAdvance also received an \$8.7 million grant to place more counselors in schools in northwest Connecticut.

PROTECTING CONSUMERS FROM MEDICAL DEBT

A report from the Kaiser Family Foundation found that medical debt is a widespread issue impacting an estimated 41% of Americans — or about 100 million adults. No one should be forced into bankruptcy simply because they got sick. It’s unconscionable that there are hospitals willing to sue patients, seize their tax refunds, and even withhold care in order to get paid.

This year, Chris reintroduced his bipartisan legislation, the Strengthening Consumer Protections and Medical Debt Transparency Act, to protect patients from many hospitals’ overly aggressive, exploitative debt collection practices and bring some much-needed transparency to the industry.

myrecordjournal.com

**Sen. Murphy hosts listening session on
medical debt in Meriden**

HELPING CONNECTICUT FARMERS



Compared to other states, Connecticut farms are smaller, grow a more diverse array of crops, and are often run by young or beginning farmers, and that means they have a unique set of needs. In response to the devastating damage caused by this summer's historic flooding, Chris led New England lawmakers in calling for additional funding to help farmers in Connecticut recover from crop damage and loss. Chris also led the delegation in calling for additional USDA support for the growing numbers of urban farmers in our state.

The Partnership for Risk Management Education and the Agricultural Management Assistance programs help Connecticut farmers deal with financial risks and strengthen their businesses. Chris introduced bipartisan legislation to increase funding for these programs on which farmers in our state rely.

COLLEGE SPORTS

Chris was one of the first members of Congress to call out the gross inequities of college sports. As more and more people realize just how broken and unfair the money-making college sports machine is, Chris reintroduced his legislation to establish an unrestricted federal right for college athletes to market their Name, Image, and Likeness and affirmed athletes' right to organize and collectively bargain for fair compensation and better working conditions.



USA TODAY

The real March Madness: Why don't NCAA schools pay college athletes who make them billions?

Sen. Chris Murphy: I've introduced legislation to help the students, but let's be honest – the NCAA doesn't need our permission to do the right thing. Our laws already allow for this arrangement.

Chris Murphy Opinion contributor

HONORING SEAMAN XAVIER SANDOR



Master at Arms Seaman Recruit Xavier Mitchell-Sandor of Shelton was just 19 years old when he died by suicide on the USS George Washington in 2022. Deplorable conditions aboard the ship and the lack of mental health services left Xavier and others like him feeling unsupported and desperate.

Chris sent letters and spoke at hearings to demand accountability and reform from the Navy. Inspired by the Sandor family's determination to seek justice, Chris introduced the Xavier Sandor Support for Sailors Act, a bill to provide junior enlisted sailors assigned to ships undergoing maintenance with housing ashore—making sure the Navy never again fails to take care of junior sailors like Xavier. The legislation was signed into law by President Biden as part of the National Defense Authorization Act.

NEWS

SHELTONHERALD

Shelton family celebrates Senate passage of bill honoring fallen sailor

NATIONAL SECURITY

As a member of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Chris is a leading voice on advancing a progressive foreign policy that centers human rights, protects U.S. national security, and maintains our competitive edge with China and Russia. As Russia continues to wage its war on Ukraine, Chris is a strong advocate for ensuring Kyiv has the support it needs.

Following Hamas' horrific attacks on Israel on October 7th, Chris has pushed the U.S. to do everything possible to release every hostage and provide the aid Israel needs to defeat Hamas. He also led the Senate in calling for the swift confirmation of key State Department posts in the region to help coordinate the U.S. response. As the humanitarian situation in Gaza remains dire, Chris has called for the U.S. to lead on providing humanitarian aid and for humanitarian pauses to ensure food, fuel, and water reaches innocent people. He has urged Israel to do more to minimize civilian harm in their fight to destroy Hamas.

When Senator Tommy Tuberville of Alabama blocked hundreds of military promotions all in the name of telling women what kind of health care they can and cannot get, Chris took to the Senate floor to call out his indefensible actions using servicemembers, their families, and U.S. national security as political pawns.

STANDING UP FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

The world pays attention when the United States does more than just talk the talk on its commitment to human rights and democracy. This year, Chris introduced a bipartisan privileged resolution to require the U.S. Department of State to report on Saudi Arabia's human rights abuses. As Chairman of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Near East, South Asia, Central Asia and Counterterrorism, he chaired a hearing on U.S. policy toward Tunisia to call attention to the country's authoritarian turn and call for more funding for civil society groups.

US senators adopt new strategy to push Saudi Arabia on human rights

Chris has also consistently been a vocal proponent of withholding security aid to Egypt given the country's failure to meet the human rights conditions required by Congress. He spoke on the Senate floor and led 10 of his colleagues in successfully pushing the administration to withhold aid this year. He also pressed our new Ambassador to Egypt to ensure she upholds U.S. values in our relationship with Cairo.





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

WWW.MURPHY.SENATE.GOV