



2025 Legislative Priorities

1. **Increase the current level of education funding provided to towns and cities through adoption of Aligned Action 7 as recommended by the Young People First report adopted by the 119K Commission and CCM's Board of Directors.** These recommendations would review and revise the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula to provide an inflation adjustment to the per-student foundation and appropriate additional support and resources for special education services, including additional weights for students with disabilities within the ECS formula.

In addition, the recommended revisions to the ECS formula would increase the weights for school districts with higher concentration of students who are economically disadvantaged and live in concentrated poverty areas as well as add weights for the number of multilingual learners in the local or regional school district. Furthermore, review current funding levels to ensure equitable facilities are available to students in every district.

Increase the current level of special education funding provided to towns and cities and enact measures that may provide relief from existing mandates. Specifically, increase the current level of state funding for special education and reduce the current excess cost rate or threshold from 4.5% to 1.5%.

Modify the minimum budget requirement (MBR) related to special education costs so that expenditures above base student costs and deficit spending by local school districts are not included in the calculation of the MBR. Also, provide assistance to towns and cities to address non-budgeted mid-year expenditures related to special education costs.

2. **Reduce the current number of required days to conduct early voting or increase state funding to carry out the requirements of early voting.** Based on the low voter turnout and the higher than anticipated cost to conduct the 2024 elections, it is imperative that the state adjust and remedy early voting to make it more efficient and cost effective.
3. **Increase capacity to accept trash at the four existing trash-to-energy facilities and/or site additional trash-to-energy plants in Connecticut.** Connecticut is shipping approximately 860 tons of municipal solid waste to out-of-state facilities, resulting in cities and towns facing increasingly higher tipping fees. The state must develop a comprehensive, sustainable strategy for confronting Connecticut's solid waste and recycling crisis that

addresses both environmental hazards and financial concerns. Increasing truck weight limits for vehicles hauling municipal solid waste and recycling will also increase cost savings to municipalities and decrease the amount of trucks on roads.

4. **Enact statutory caps on damages for municipal liability by:**

a) **Capping any municipal negligence claim at \$250,000.**

b) **Amending the highway defect statute for municipalities (CGS 13a-149) to cap damages (both economic and non-economic damages) at \$20,000 per occurrence.** Approximately 1/3 of municipal liability claims are associated with this statute and damages are ballooning into six-figure settlements. There needs to be a balance to ensure individuals receive proper compensation without undue financial impact on taxpayer funds.

c) **Amending CGS 46a-60 (CT Fair Employment Practices Act) to cap damages based on employer size, specifically cap damages:**

- a. For employers with 15-100 employees - \$25,000.
- b. For employers with 101-200 employees - \$50,000.
- c. For employers with 201-500 employees - \$100,000.
- d. For employers with more than 500 employees, - \$150,000.

This change will encourage greater claims to be filed in federal court rather than state court, thereby assigning it in a system that is better equipped to handle employment claims, as well reduce the caseload within the State Judicial Branch.

5. **Provide more funding to support mass transit such as rail, bus service and highway improvements.** Ensure mass transit policy is consistent with the state's goal of more transit-oriented development projects and continue to invest in mass transit throughout the state, which is vital for its sustainability and success. Expand the Connecticut Department of Transportation's Micro-transit Grant Program, which has been filling voids in public transportation in municipalities that have been utilizing the grants.

6. **Modify the Paid Sick Leave changes made in Public Act 24-8 to allow employers to request reasonable documentation for employees using paid sick leave taken for the purposes permitted under the act.** Prior to PA 24-8, municipal employers were permitted to request reasonable documentation to verify the illness or cause of missed work; these practices are almost always collectively bargained. By circumventing the collective bargaining process and eliminating the ability for employers to request verification of sick leave, essential workers may now abuse their sick leave in a way that may threaten the health and safety of Connecticut residents. For example, a firefighter or police officer who is scheduled to work for minimum staffing requirements can call out sick a minute before his or her shift every Friday for several consecutive weeks- causing an administrative and

cost burden for the municipality and a potential health or safety liability for the community – and the employer has no ability to address blatant abuse of sick leave. CCM opposes unfunded mandates that limit the ability or eliminate a municipality’s right to collectively bargain with employees.

7. **Increase tax abatements for affordable housing.** Seek to re-establish reimbursements from the state for tax abatements for affordable housing units and downtown development to incentivize and make projects more economically viable due to an increase in construction costs and high interest rates.

Increase Infrastructure Funding for Transit-Oriented Developments (TOD) and Affordable Housing Projects. Increase the amount of money allocated to the Clean Water Fund and dedicate this increase towards TOD and affordable housing projects without diluting existing Clean Water Funds. The lack of water and sewer infrastructure often limits the ability of municipalities to increase its affordable housing stock or to pursue TOD projects. Setting aside Clean Water funds will make TOD and affordable housing projects more viable economically and environmentally and will help the state move towards its goals of facilitating building near transit hubs and increasing its affordable housing stock.

Prioritize available Municipal Redevelopment Authority (MRDA) funds for municipalities that adopt local TOD ordinances and protect Urban Act and STEAP funds from being tied to municipal TOD initiatives.

Legislative Issues of Importance

- **Support enabling legislation to broaden municipal options for resiliency planning that protect infrastructure, businesses, and residents from increasing extreme weather events.** Encourage the state to provide funding for MS4 stormwater permit compliance, flood mitigation grant procurement, and local match requirements for federal programs. Foster better municipal collaboration and partnerships with relevant state agencies such as DEEP, DOT, and DECD to improve state and local flood mitigation efforts.
- **Create new state grant programs and increase funding for existing infrastructure programs.** One program that has seen success in Massachusetts is to create a state grant program specifically for municipalities to replace undersized and degraded culverts. This will include improved structural and environmental design standards and flood resiliency criteria and will have a significant impact in mitigating flood risk in towns and cities.

An existing program that has high demand from municipalities and the potential for growth is the DEEP’s Climate Resilient Fund (DCRF) grant program. To meet the anticipated demand,

it is recommended to increase the funding levels for DCRF and consider using these funds as an alternative to federal funding sources.

- **Provide technical assistance and management capacity building.** Many municipalities do not have adequate staffing or capacity to apply and compete for state and federal grants. Providing state funding to cover a portion of the required local match for federal grants and promoting regional collaboration when applying for state and federal grants will assist in alleviating this problem. This can be accomplished by streamlining and simplifying the application process for state resiliency grants, providing ongoing outreach training and tools to municipalities and by strengthening the role of the Council of Governments (COGs) to manage and administer regional flood resilience programs on behalf of their respective participating municipalities.

Encouraging and incentivizing municipalities to establish storm water authorities, local resiliency reserve funds, Resilience Improvement Districts (RID) and municipal flood prevention, climate resilience and erosion control boards will help towns and cities to proactively develop protocols and processes to address and mitigate flood risks.

- **Revise building codes and streamline permitting to address resiliency.** One area that has had success in Rhode Island is to implement an off-site stormwater retrofit program to promote flood resilience and water quality improvement projects that reduce Directly Connected Impervious Area (DCIA) on municipal and private parcels outside of the CONNDOT right-of-way. In addition, implement the recommendations of DEEP's ongoing initiative to improve the state coastal permitting process.

It is recommended that the State Building Code include resiliency and enable municipalities to amend and allow for their zoning regulations to require or promote resiliency initiatives. Furthermore, the state should incorporate incentives in state grant programs to encourage flood mitigation best practices.

Another recommendation is to expand the eligible use of the municipal Town Aid Road (TAR) program to include construction, reconstruction, improvements and maintenance to increase resiliency against precipitation, flooding and sea level rise.

- **Enact measure to address street takeovers, illegal use of ATV's/motorbikes, and vehicle break-ins.** The proposal would be similar to HB 5413 from 2024 that passed the Judiciary Committee and House, but was not taken up by the Senate. It received largely bipartisan support.
- **Allow towns and cities to diversify and develop other revenue streams in addition to the property tax.** Specifically, dedicate a portion of sales tax revenue and 1% of the meal and beverage tax to towns and cities.
- **Reduce the burden of the regressive property tax on residents and businesses.** Municipalities continue to advocate for an increase in the reimbursement to towns and cities

for Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) for mandated tax-exempt property and continue working towards full statutory payments.

Other initiatives that will help alleviate pressures on the property tax system are increasing parity of reimbursement levels between state-owned property and college and hospital property and increasing the amount of the Mohegan-Pequot fund that is distributed to towns and cities, which will include requiring a two-thirds vote of each chamber of the General Assembly before funding to municipalities can be reduced. (See PA 23-179/SB 1213, which passed both chambers unanimously, but was vetoed by the Governor).

- **Enhance the process to allow each municipality within a primary service area to designate their primary service area responder (PSAR) for emergency medical services.** While changes have been made to the process, towns and cities that have attempted to change their PSAR have had limited success. The foundation for a specific proposal would be similar to HB 6605 introduced in 2023, but was not enacted.
- **Increase local control over the siting of renewable energy projects, with consideration of a threshold by megawatts whereby towns would gain control over siting.** Require that the testimony of the chief elected official of the municipality be considered in decision making on siting, and that the local Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) be used/referenced in decision making on siting.
- **Provide a dedicated and sustainable revenue stream to support the firefighter cancer relief fund by imposing up to a 10-cent surcharge on each phone line.** The balance of the fund is approximately \$7 million, however there is concern that the amount is unsustainable to meet the anticipated demand of the program. The Office of Fiscal Analysis has estimated that for every 1-cent surcharge would yield approximately \$600,000 per year. In the 2016 legislation, when the E-911 surcharge was imposed to fund the program, it was deemed illegal because it would have been imposed a non-911 related charge on the E-911 fund. As the 911 system is partially federally funded, the FCC requires that any charge on the account only be associated with the E-911 system.
- **Support efforts in partnership with the state to find cost effective solutions to reducing, reusing, and recycling materials through Extended Producer Responsibility.** The state should continue to explore innovative ideas in reducing the waste stream by focusing on EPR for items such as packaging, lithium-ion batteries, and household hazardous waste.
- **Create a subsection within the larceny statutes that would make "smash and grab" larcenies ineligible for Accelerated Rehabilitation or other diversionary programs if within a 24-hour period (a) involve three or more incidents, or (b) occur within two or more municipalities.** "Smash and grab" robberies involve violent acts that involve breaking a window or destroying a barrier that allows quick access into a vehicle or other property in order to steal items. These are increasing with frequency and raise public safety concerns.

- **Develop statewide pluvial (rain water) flood hazard mapping.** Current FEMA and NOAA flood hazard mapping does not account for pluvial or drainage-related flooding, which is flooding independent of flowing bodies of water such as rivers, streams, and coastal waters caused by extreme rainfall. This mapping should consider projected future increases in precipitation and can be used as a tool to help augment FEMA flood hazard maps.