



April, 2024 Legislative Highlights

Greetings, and we hope you're having a wonderful spring. Although this year has a short legislative session it is filled with potential and also intrigue! Once again in CT we have the momentum and people power for groundbreaking wins on climate, democracy and health care. Some highlights are below. As always, our strength comes from you, our members, and we need your help to WIN! Session ends May 8th. Visit ccag.net to view more.

CLIMATE JUSTICE/ENERGY and ENVIRONMENT

Holding Insurance Companies Accountable. [SB 11](#) would implement the Governors' bill. Crucial to the bill's efficacy is an amendment that advances a climate resiliency fund, financed through a surcharge on insurers' policies offered to fossil fuel projects. Those funds would then provide weatherization and clean energy to environmental justice communities harmed by extreme weather disasters fueled by climate chaos. This would be the first such law in the country. Connecticut needs to lead! Contact Helendhumphreys@gmail.com to learn more and get engaged in this work.

[SB 292](#) AAC the Use of PFAS in Certain Products would turn off the tap on PFAS or "forever chemicals" into our bodies and water streams by banning these toxic chemical from use in consumer goods such as apparel, homewares, furniture, children's products, and personal hygiene products.

Babies and toddlers are uniquely susceptible to PFAS in floor polishes and waxes since they spend much of their lives on the floor and frequently put their hands (and everything else) in their mouths as a way to explore the environment around them. ● Decades' worth of these compounds are sitting in landfills right now – presenting a contaminant to manage for waste handlers who didn't create the pollution, but now find themselves awash in it. ● Those working with PFAS such as chemical manufacturing workers and those working to manufacture products that have high levels of PFAS like ski wax are also at higher risk

Over the last few years, with your help, we fought for and won legislation to restrict PFAS in food packaging and in firefighting foam, required our state to implement a take-back program of old foam, and utilized a fluorine free foam in the future unless required by federal law. In 2023 we passed a bill which established an account in the general fund to provide grants to towns that need testing and remediation. This is helpful for dealing with earlier problems. But failing to do more to prevent future poisonings will only necessitate the allocation of more resources in the future while unnecessarily impacting the health of countless people. We can't get the PFAS out of our environment if we continue selling products containing PFAS in our state!

[HB 5004](#) AAC the Implementation of Certain Climate Change Measures aka The Big Green Monster Bill codifies a zero-carbon electricity goal by 2030 and offers measures to advance CT's goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, phase out the use of natural gas, invest in renewable energy, incentivize sustainable purchasing by local governments, and enhance nature-based solutions to mitigate climate change.

DEMOCRACY

[SB 441](#) AAC Election Administration Oversight. CCAG supports this bill with certain amendments. We strongly support the concept of a Municipal Election Accountability Board. However, we believe the bill needs some changes to ensure timely action that protects election integrity. If properly structured, this bill will help to deter and better handle controversies like what transpired in Bridgeport.

[HB 5448](#) AAC Security of Certain Election Workers and Elections Related Locations. Poll workers are the backbone of American democracy, and our voting system would be obsolete without them. This bill protects poll workers from the disturbing influx of violence and threats they've been subjected to since the 2020 election. The bill protects the privacy of election workers' personal information, bans the presence of firearms and deadly weapons near polling locations and other key election infrastructure, and establishes serious legal consequences for harassing, threatening, or harming an election worker.

HEALTH CARE

Connecticut residents are finding it more and more difficult to afford the health care they need. CCAG continues to play a unique and necessary role in calling out the greed of for-profit companies that divert billions of dollars from your care to making wealthy shareholders and executives even richer.

Junk Health Plans. CCAG and allies have been fighting Association Health "Plans", which are not even actually insurance and are not now legal in Connecticut. Representative Kerry Wood and CBIA have been pushing for these junk plans. They have been shown in other states to result in discriminatory pricing based on age, race, or disability, and destabilize the health insurance market. Fortunately this year's bill, HB 5347, did not advance out of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee. CCAG issued a call to action on the anniversary of the Affordable Care Act against this horrible concept, and will remain vigilant to ensure they do not re-appear in another form by the end of the session.

Private Equity. CCAG testified in favor of bills requiring study and reporting on the extent and details of private equity ownership of health care facilities ([HB 5319](#)) and of nursing homes ([SB 318](#)). Both health care practices and facilities and nursing homes are increasingly being bought by private equity, even while outcomes and care are shown to plummet under the short-term, intensive focus on profit that accompanies such ownership.

[SB 433](#) Racial Equity in Public Health Commission Recommendations focuses on racial equity in public health by developing plans regarding public policies and rule setting, hiring, and contracting to begin redressing the harms from decades of institutional racism. CCAG applauds its emphasis on community engagement.

[SB 181](#) AAC Emergency Department Overcrowding would begin to address the growing issue of emergency room overcrowding by following the recommendations of a working group to provide detailed information to the state on numerous factors including boarding, in which hospitals opt to leave admitted patients in the ER that are contributing to the problem.

Medical debt. As part of its state budget, the Lamont administration has proposed a \$20 million investment to eliminate medical debt for households with an income up to four times the federal poverty level or whose medical debt amounts to at least 5% of their annual income. The governor's office expects a total of 250,000 residents to benefit. CCAG is also supporting a number of bills which would address medical debt by requiring hospitals to better provide and inform people about assistance, promote affordability as criteria in the CT Insurance Department's rate review, to revise the Certificate of Need process to provide greater accountability and transparency.

These are just a few highlights, for more information and upcoming action on this or our other work, please visit our website, join our email list or contact:

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