

House Republican Press Release

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Bills Moving Forward, State Funds For New Fairfield



Capitol Commentary *By State Rep. Mary Ann Carson*

On Friday, April 4, Speaker of the House James Amann held an event recognizing National Donate Life Month. During the event, House Bill 5631, An Act Concerning An Income Tax Deduction For Expenses Associated With Organ Donation, was noted. As mentioned in a previous column, Senator Cappiello and I introduced this bill for the past several years.

This year, the Public Health Committee agreed to raise this as a Committee Bill; and for numerous reasons, it has gained bi-partisan support. A strong advocate is a State Representative from the northwest corner of the State who recently learned that he needs a kidney transplant. This bill would provide a tax deduction not to exceed \$10,000 to individuals who are living organ donors. The legislation would make these donors eligible for tax deductions to cover expenses such as lost wages, out-of-pocket medical expenses, travel, etc. incurred for this purpose.

The need for this legislation was brought to my attention by a New Fairfield constituent, who is an organ recipient. She was extremely grateful to the individual who donated a kidney to her and was aware of similar laws in other states. She is also very much aware of the sacrifice made by “her donor” and the costs, which are incurred by donors in general. The bill has been approved by both the Public Health Committee and Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee and now awaits action by the House of Representatives.

On Thursday, April 3, the House of Representatives approved House Bill 5706, An Act Concerning The Placement Of Identifying Marks On Dental Prostheses. This legislation would require dentists to offer to those patients who need removable prosthetic dentures, bridges, appliances, or other structures the opportunity to have identifying marks placed on the prosthesis.

The Department of Public Health, Connecticut Dental Association and Connecticut Task Force On Oral Health for Older Adults all support this legislation. Testimony for the public hearing noted that lost dentures is a common and significant problem for patients in long term care (LTC) facilities. Without any form of identification, LTC staff have no means of knowing which dentures belong to whom. Many residents are not able to

replace these dentures for financial reasons or insurance limitations. This leads to poor nutritional intake, as well as poor self-image and inhibited communications.

In addition, to the benefits listed above, identification of victims in mass disasters would be greatly enhanced with these identifying marks, as was cited following Hurricane Katrina. It is very important to provide closure to families who have lost loved ones in such disasters. The bill now moves to the State Senate for further action.

On April 9, The House of Representatives approved House Bill 5748, which would create new restrictions for teen drivers. As cited by several proponents during debate on the bill, it is, in part, a response to several high profile fatalities involving teen drivers throughout the state in the past year.

The bill approved includes provisions that would: Increase penalties for those drivers who are charged with racing, reckless driving, speeding and cell phone use; Require parents or guardians to attend 2 hours of driver training; Change the curfew of 16 & 17 year olds from midnight to 11:00 pm; Double, from 20 to 40 hours, of behind the wheel training that must include on the road training; Require seatbelts be worn by all passengers of vehicles being driven by 16 & 17 year olds. (Current law only requires front seat passengers and children in booster seats to wear seat belts). It now goes to the State Senate for consideration.

We are now in the final weeks of this year's legislative session and much legislation will be moving forward during this time. I look forward to providing updates on more noteworthy bills as they do.

Editors Note: State Representative Mary Ann Carson represents Kent, New Fairfield, New Milford and Sherman in the Connecticut General Assembly.