

House Republican Press Release

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Keep Our Children In Connecticut, Support First Time Home Buyers Bill



Family means a lot to me.

I have always assumed that when my children reached adulthood they would find jobs in Connecticut, and marry and raise their families here.

At times, I have imagined myself as a grandparent visiting my children's homes and marveling at how my grandchildren have grown since I last saw them.

While I still see my wife and I making those trips to our children's homes a few years from now, lately I've been wondering if those visits will be to their homes in North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Arizona or Nevada rather than in Waterbury, Middlebury, Wolcott, Prospect or Naugatuck.

It's not such a farfetched scenario, given what has been happening in Connecticut for years.

A recent New York Times editorial, citing figures compiled by the Connecticut Economic Resource Center, referred to the phenomenon as 'Connecticut's Diaspora' - the loss of thousands of young adults between 1990 and 2000.

During that time, we lost a higher percentage of 18 - to 34-year-olds than any other state - 23 percent, or more than 200,000 people. The editorial noted that one major reason young adults are leaving the state is the high cost of housing here.

The loss of so many of our brightest young people to states in the south and southwest - where taxes, the cost of living and housing prices are significantly lower than ours - is not just putting a strain on family ties; it also is threatening Connecticut's future.

In a recent Connecticut Business and Industry Association survey, 44 percent of business executives said they plan to increase the size of their work forces over the next several months. However, 66 percent of them also said finding new or replacement workers would be difficult.

If Connecticut companies continue to have trouble finding qualified people to fill key positions, it is only a matter of time before they either expand out-of-state or close down their in-state operations and move elsewhere.

For out-of-state firms, the relative scarcity of qualified Connecticut residents to fill important positions will make them less and less likely to consider setting up shop here.

As a legislator who is committed to encouraging economic growth in the Greater Waterbury Area and in our state, and a parent with two daughters at UConn, I believe it is essential for us to do whatever we can to help stem the loss of young workers to other states.

That is why I have cosponsored a measure to establish a First-Time Homebuyer Trust Fund (House Bill 5490). It is designed to help recent Connecticut college graduates buy their first home and give them a strong incentive to live and work in Connecticut.

We call it the “Learn Here, Live Here” law. It would create a first-time homebuyer trust fund derived from state income taxes paid by recent graduates of Connecticut institutions of higher learning. Participants in the program, which would be managed by the state treasurer, could access money from the fund only once within 10 years after graduation and only for the purpose of buying their first home in Connecticut.

Under our proposal:

- Income taxes paid by graduates of Connecticut higher education institutions would be deposited into their accounts within the First-Time Homebuyer Trust Fund. The taxes graduates would pay over the years would become a form of savings account from which they could withdraw funds for the purchase of a home in Connecticut.
- Individuals who graduate from accredited public or private institutions of higher education in Connecticut that award associate’s degrees, bachelor’s degrees, master’s degrees, and PhDs, beginning with the class of 2007, would be eligible for the program.
- Participants could access the cash in their accounts only one time within 10 years after their graduation. If, after 10 years, money had not been withdrawn from their accounts, the funds would be transferred to the state’s general fund.

If enacted into law, our Learn Here, Live Here program would make it more likely that my daughters DeAnna and Krista, who are UConn students, and my son, Anthony Jr., and other young people like them, will seek jobs in Connecticut and remain here for the rest of their lives.

It would help alleviate Connecticut’s brain drain and nurture a brighter economic future for our state.