

Legislative Update

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The 2023 session began January 4th. The Democrats won convincingly in November and have elected what might be the most progressive group of legislators CT has ever seen. Their focus will range from healthcare, to energy and transportation policy which are emerging as preeminent issues the General Assembly will tackle. The economy and cost of goods will also take center stage.

Over the past two election cycles, which included the COVID years, approximately 80 new legislators have been elected. As we expect the Capitol to be back to business as usual, reintroducing ourselves and the Society will be our top priority. CPS was able to make some inroads with those elected in 2020, but with the Capitol closed and everything forced to zoom, our relationships are not what they were pre-pandemic. We will again be welcoming the legislature with a letter but we also hope to reinstitute our reception that has allowed members to interact with legislators and further build relationships. The 2023 session is the longest the calendar allows, with adjournment on June 7th, so there will be many opportunities for members to be involved throughout the legislative process.

CPS priorities for 2023 will be the extension of tele-health benefits which are set to expire in 2024 and transparency in provider network listings of insurance companies. We know that we will most likely deal with defensive issues such as psychology prescribing and various others like proper funding of CoCM. There will also be follow up on initiatives that were put into place with the Children's Mental Health bill that passed last year. The Senate has once again made children's mental health a priority issue. Although language of the bill has not yet be revealed, we anticipate additional funding for programs recently put into place. We are hopeful preliminary outcomes will be available so we can work on expansion and the shortage of mental health providers in CT. The State budget is again running a surplus, and we are optimistic that the Governor's budget, which debuts in February, will continue to invest in mental healthcare.

With the many retirements and more newly elected Democratic legislators, we will have new chairmen in two key committees of cognizance. Sen Matt Lesser (D- Middletown), who formerly chaired the Insurance Committee, will be replaced by Sen Jorge Cabrera (D- Hamden). Lesser will slide over to chair the Human Services Committee. In the Public Health Committee, Sen Saud Anwar (D-South Windsor) will take over the reins from retiring Senator Mary Daugherty-Abrams. Anwar is a practicing physician, and has always been a friend of CPS. Kerry Wood (D-Rocky Hill) will remain chair of the Insurance Committee and Cristin McCarthy-Vahey (D-Fairfield) has been named House chair of Public Health.

As we head into the session, I urge all members to become involved. Your voice truly makes a difference and will help to advance policies that are best for patients and the practice of psychiatry.