

The Connecticut General Assembly



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Contact: Danielle Faipler
860-240-8790



State Rep. Turco Advocates for Debt-Free Community College

HARTFORD — **State Representative Gary Turco** (D – Newington), who serves as Vice-Chair of the General Assembly's Higher Education and Employment Advancement committee, joined several members of the legislature's Progressive Caucus for a press conference early Tuesday afternoon to outline top priorities for the 2020 legislative session. Among these priorities includes ensuring Connecticut students continue to have access to the state's Debt-Free Community College program.

"As the cost of higher education rises, a college degree has become out of reach for many students unless they take on mounds of student loan debt. The average college student in the Class of 2018 graduated with about \$38,669 in debt. Connecticut has the third-highest accumulated student loan debt in the country. This is crippling younger generations and stifling economic development in our state," said **Rep. Turco**. "Young workers are leaving the state to live in areas with a lower cost of living or more opportunity."

During the 2019 legislative session **Rep. Turco** worked to include funding for the Debt-Free Community College program in the biennium budget, however the 2021 Recommended Budget Adjustments proposes limitations to the program that will cause many students to be left out.

Rep. Turco recognizes that Connecticut is losing young, talented workers to areas with a lower cost of living and more opportunities, which is straining the state's economic growth.

In addition to supporting a universal debt-free community college program, **Rep. Turco** has introduced legislation incentivizing young residents to stay in-state and offset cost of living issues to help residents get ahead.

Among his proposed bills is a [tax cut for college and occupational school graduates](#), which the higher education committee recently voted to draft.

The bill would allow any resident who earns less than \$75,000 in annual income and has a bachelor's degree, associate degree, or an advanced manufacturing certificate from an in-state school to receive an income tax credit.

Rep. Turco has also proposed the following bills to provide relief to working and middle class residents who are struggling to make ends meet:

- [HB 5025](#), AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PERSONAL INCOME TAX CREDIT FOR LONG-TERM CARE INSURANCE PREMIUM PAYMENTS
- [HB 5027](#), AN ACT ESTABLISHING A CREDIT AGAINST THE PERSONAL INCOME TAX FOR CERTAIN FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYERS
- [HB 5028](#), AN ACT INCREASING THE PROPERTY TAX CREDIT

Rep. Turco understands investing in the working class and middle class will promote economic growth and improve Connecticut's overall fiscal health, although these tax cuts represent a short-term, temporary loss in state revenue needed to fund vital services such as education, affordable health care and small business assistance.

He has also requested several other bills through the committee process. During even session years, legislators are only permitted to introduce bills that are financial in nature. Other bills must be raised by a committee.

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