July 28, 2020

Insights

The Government Affairs Group, Murtha Cullina

What's happened in Connecticut since Friday, July 24, 2020.

Special Session Update – Senate Passes Legislation – Now Headed for Governor's Signature

The Senate convened in Special Session on Tuesday, July 28th to debate and vote on the four bills passed by the House last week. The Senate passed the four pieces of legislation in concurrence with the House as listed below. The long debate on the police accountability bill stretched until 4 AM on July 29th when the bill passed. All four bills were immediately transmitted to the Governor for his signature.

1) **Telehealth to allow patient visits by telehealth** – HB 6001 passed the Senate 35 – 0 (with one lawmakers absent/not voting). The final legislation as amendedalong with any fiscal notes and analysis can be found here.
The bill:

- Authorizes telehealth services, including audio-only, to individuals who are on Medicaid and to privately insured individuals whose provider is in-network.
- Extends the DPH Commissioner powers through March 15, 2021 to temporarily waive, modify, or extend regulatory requirements to allow Connecticut residents to receive telehealth services from out-of-state providers.

2) **Absentee ballots in the November election** – HB 6002 passed the Senate 35 – 1. The final legislation as amended can be found here.
The bill:

- Allows eligible voters to vote by absentee ballot for the November 3, 2020 election.
- Requires town clerks to designate and authorize absentee ballot voters to be able to return absentee ballots at drop boxes.
- Authorizes town clerks to mail absentee voting sets using third-party vendor that the secretary of the state selects and approves.

3) **Insulin cost control measures** – HB 6003 passed the Senate 35 – 1. The final legislation as amendedalong with any fiscal notes and analysis can be found here.
The bill:

- Caps the cost of insulin at $25 per month and insulin related equipment at $100 per month.
- Allows pharmacists to prescribe a 30-day supply of insulin to a person.
- Creates an emergency insulin supply program.
- Establishes a workgroup to study the viability of expanding the federal 340B program through Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) to insured Connecticut residents.

4) **Police accountability and reform** – HB 6004 passed the Senate 21 – 15. The final legislation as amendedalong with any fiscal notes and analysis can be found here. The bill makes many changes some of which are:

- Allows citizens to file civil lawsuits against police, by eliminating the qualified immunity provisions which currently protect police officers from being sued in state courts.
- Requires the use of body and dash cameras for all municipal and state police.
- Establishes an Office of Inspector General to investigate deadly use of force cases.
- Allows municipalities to create their own citizen review boards of the police department.
- Bans chokeholds except when necessary to protect a person from imminent threat of death.
- Allows the Police Officer Standards and Training Council to revoke a police officer's certification if they use

unjustifiable or excessive physical force or behave in a way that undermines the public's confidence in law enforcement.

- Requires police union contracts to disclose various personnel files under the FOI laws. This would apply to the current state police contract effectively overturning the provision in the 2019 state police contract.

Lawmakers continue to discuss the possibility of another special session in September to address other issues such as COVID related relief, the state budget, and other legislation.

We will continue to keep you informed on the possibility of another special session in September as we learn more details.

Quarantine Travel Advisory – Update July 28: 34 States and Washington D.C. & Puerto Rico

The CT, NY and NJ regional quarantine travel advisory was updated on July 28 with the addition of three more states: Illinois, Kentucky, Minnesota. Also added are Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C. The list now includes a total of 34 states: Alaska, Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Nebraska, New Mexico, Nevada, Ohio, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, Washington D.C., and Wisconsin.

The current full list of states to which the travel advisory applies changes frequently so be sure to check here.

Please note as part of the Governor's 62nd executive order, the Department of Public Health is now allowed to issue a $1,000 fine to travelers who do not comply with the 14-day self-quarantine or fail to complete the DPH online health form which can be found here. For further information, please click here for the press release.

Closing the Digital Divide for Students

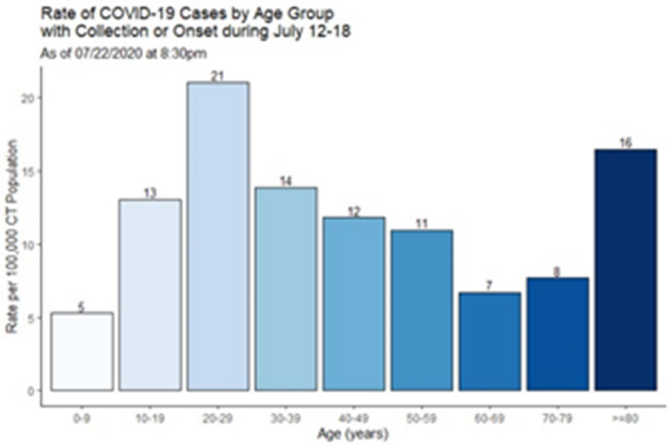
In an attempt to help close the digital divide for students during the ongoing pandemic, the Governor announced on July 28th the launch of his "Everybody Learns" initiative. This program is a $43.5 million investment in remote learning solutions to empower students across the state to continue to learn from home. According to his press release, the funding

will be used to purchase 50,000 laptops for students, 12 months of access to at-home internet for 60,000 students, create public hotspots free to the public at 200 community sites across the state, and offer social emotional learning content to school districts statewide. The funds would come from the state's portion of the federal CARES Act, the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund, and the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund.

COVID-19 Lamont Administration Response

July 24 – July 28, 2020

As of July 28, 49,077 Connecticut residents have tested positive for COVID-19, with more than 750,700 tests having been conducted. Approximately 54 patients are currently hospitalized. The total statewide number of COVID-19 associated fatalities is 4,423. The state's public health metrics continue to be stable with the positivity test rate remaining at approximately 1% or lower. However, today the Governor announced his concern that young adults between the ages of 18 – 29 infected with COVID are growing more than any other age group over the past several weeks. See the chart below. For further information, please refer to the Governor's press release here.



The Governor has not issued any Executive Orders since our last update issued Friday, July 24th.

CT News and Opinion

Insulin, telehealth bills headed for governor's desk
Jenna Carlesso, CT Mirror

Police reforms clear Connecticut Senate on partisan vote
Mark Pazniokas, CT Mirror

Senate Sends Absentee Ballot Bill To Lamont
Christine Stuart, CT News Junkie

Advocates for police reform say 'immunity' change is small
Ken Dixon, CT Post

Connecticut lawmakers call out Eversource after hefty rate increase
Tony Terzi, Fox 61

State Won't Dictate School Reopening
Christine Stuart, CT News Junkie

Thanking Connecticut's educated teachers
Dianna Wentzell, CT Viewpoints, Associate Professor and Director of Clinical Education at the University of Saint Joseph and former Connecticut Commissioner of Education.

Eversource customers in Connecticut are noticing higher bills than usual. The electricity provider points to a deal between the state and Millstone.
Stephen Singer, Hartford Courant

GOP stimulus bill has billions for CT defense contractors in what Dems call a 'slush fund'
Ana Radelat, CT Mirror

National News and Opinion

Marlins outbreak casts harsh light on US coronavirus response
Brett Samuels, The Hill

McConnell says he will not negotiate with Democrats on liability protections in coronavirus bill
Jacob Pramuk, CNBC

'It's a mess': Republican senators deride key proposals in GOP virus package
Andrew Desiderio, Marianne Levine, Heather Caygle, Politico

NIH Director: Hope for a Coronavirus Vaccine by the End of 2020
Hayley Lemmons and Michael Morella, US News and World Report

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