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Governor Lamont provided the legislature with his proposed \$46 Billion biennial budget last week. We are looking through the specific details included in the legislation he has submitted to implement his budget and any effect on our clients. The Governor's budget focused on the state's efforts to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic. Much of the "new" funding will be tied to education and getting the state's economy back. Specific details will be worked out through the legislature as this is the first step in the budget process that will continue through the Finance and Appropriations Committees and leadership of the House and Senate. Senate Appropriations co-chair Cathy Osten told us that it is her plan to adopt a budget earlier than previous years to help the municipalities plan for their local budgets.

Of note, Governor Ned Lamont will be working closely with Connecticut's neighboring states to combat the spread of Covid-19. Lamont also wants to use these relationships with neighboring states to make headway on electric transportation to reduce carbon emissions and tighten security against cyberattacks; he promises to work with these states and tribal partners to update gaming and to work towards legalizing Marijuana by May 2022; half of the revenue from the legalization of marijuana would go to towns and cities, and the bill would erase most criminal sentences relating to marijuana as well as create a marijuana business licensing structure to help communities affected by the war on drugs.

Lamont addresses the necessity of affordable and accessible healthcare for the family and the individual, especially during the covid-19 pandemic. He also promises to uphold the paid family and medical leave act, acknowledging the minimum wage essential workers and their importance. For small businesses, Lamont is continuing to provide grants to help these businesses survive in the pandemic. He is also making the Shared Work Program more efficient to keep jobs and employees.

In terms of education, Lamont will be upholding Connecticut's standards for at home education, keeping up with our legacy of becoming the first state in the country to be fully prepared for remote learning by providing computers and internet access for children. In terms of funding, Lamont wants to use federal money as well as uphold the Educational Cost Sharing formula. He plans to widen History and Social Studies curriculums to include more Hispanic, Native, and African American history and culture. Lamont also promises to sustain the best education and workforce development for all children in Connecticut.

In addition, Lamont talks about voting and his plan to make absentee ballots, early voting, and drop-off ballot boxes a permanent option for voters.

Lamont further addresses the state budget and the ability to fund critical services without raising taxes; this includes cost equality benchmarks for healthcare procedures and services, and continuing to uphold “Centers of Excellence” for higher quality healthcare at a cheaper rate.

Lamont also promises to sustain Connecticut’s reputation of one of the most family friendly, female friendly and safest states in the country. The state will also uphold pay equity.

Lamont closed with a promise to widen affordable housing, access to broadband connections, transit developments, and open choice school incentives; he will also expand workforce development and the small business growth fund.

This session, as many of you know, is like no other as both the executive and legislative branches are working remotely. Additionally, connecting with policy makers has been moved from lobbying the halls of the LOB to emails, texts and personal calls. We are talking with members and advocating on behalf of your positions.