

LEGISLATIVE 2019 WRAP UP AND LOOK FORWARD TO 2020

TALKS WITH TERRI

STATE REPRESENTATIVE TERRI CORTVRIEND | DISTRICT 72 | MIDDLETOWN & PORTSMOUTH | (401) 472-4789 | REP-CORTVRIEND@RILEGISLATURE.GOV



REP. CORTVRIEND CO-SPONSOR OF STUDENT LOAN BILL OF RIGHTS SIGNED INTO LAW

A new law co-sponsored by Rep. Terri Cortvriend will protect student borrowers and establish oversight of student loan services operating in Rhode Island. The legislation, which was backed by General Treasurer Seth Magaziner and Attorney General Peter F Neronha was passed by the General Assembly in June and signed by the Governor in July. Representative Cortvriend participated in the governor’s working group that formulated the legislation. Borrowers in RI report being double-charged or incorrectly marked as delinquent in payment with loan services taking months, or even years, to correct mistakes. Borrowers were also being pushed in repayment schemes that were in the best financial interest of the loan servicer, not the borrower.

IN 2020 REP. CORTVRIEND IS FOCUSED ON PROTECTING OUR DRINKING WATER & OUR ENVIRONMENT

Rep. Cortvriend co-sponsored legislation to be introduced in the 2020 session to both ban PFAS in food packaging and also require DOH and the DEM to take action to establish maximum contaminate levels of polyfluoroalkyl 2 substances (PFAS) and set interim standards for drinking water. In the off season Rep. Cortvriend has been participating in webinar with legislators across the country learning what other states are doing to protect their citizens from these “forever chemicals”.
To learn more <http://www.saferstates.com/toxic-chemicals/pfas/>
Read my Letter to Editor <https://www.terricortvriend.com/single-post/2019/12/21/Cortvriend-Speakman-to-introduce-Safe-Drinking-Water-Act>

Rep. Cortvriend continues to work on Environmental Issues; Working with Rep Carson, **Rep Cortvriend has brought together concerned members of the community forming the Aquidneck Island Climate Caucus.** Rep. Cortvriend and Rep. Carson jointly authored an op ed raising awareness regarding the challenges that sea level rise require us to face.
Read my op-ed here: <https://www.terricortvriend.com/single-post/Rhode-Island-Must-Face-Reality-of-Rising-Shores>

REP. CORTVRIEND LEAD SPONSOR ON NATHAN BRUNO/ JASON FLATT ACT, SUICIDE PREVENTATION LEGISLATION

Rep. Cortvriend was approached by the students from the “Be Great for Nate” and an associated program called the **Every Student Initiative** with the ideas that became this legislation. Part of the bill is modeled after a state law passed in Tennessee and 19 other states, which was named after Jason Flatt, a 16-year-old from Nashville who took his own life. Other parts were the students’ own ideas that they would like to see addressed. Rep. Cortvriend remains in contact with the ESI group, Mr. Flatt the father of Jason Flatt, and others who work to prevent suicide.

Upon passage the Nathan Bruno/ Jason Flatt act would require all public school districts to adopt suicide prevention policies and train all personnel in suicide awareness and prevention on an annual basis.

“Our state and our country are facing alarmingly high rates of suicide. Children of all ages face pressure from all angles in today’s society. Social media, self-acceptance, bullies, drugs and alcohol, athletics, image, relationships, and home issues are just a few of the many pressures our children face every day. Kids need support from the adults in their lives, and this bill strives to ensure the adults they see every day at school are ready to connect them to help when they need it.”

For more information about the Every Student Initiative and mental health awareness resources, visit everystudentinitiative.org.

REP. CORTVRIEND LEAD SPONSOR ON PRESERVATION OF FAMILIES WITH DISABLED PARENT ACT

Rep. Cortvriend works with the Disabled Community and the RI chapter of the Federation of the Blind towards securing the parental rights of parents with disabilities by reintroducing House Bill (2019-H 5562). This bill precludes the disability of a parent from serving as a basis for denial or restriction in matters involving a child’s welfare, foster care, family law, guardianship and adoption.

“It is time that we move past the fundamentally untrue notion that individuals with disabilities are incapable of being loving and providing parents to their children. This legislation will prevent children from being denied loving homes due to the false idea that their parents are inadequate guardians due to their disabilities.”

REP. CORTVRIEND INTRODUCED CLIMATE LITERACY RESOLUTION

Working with the RI Environmental Educators Association Rep. Cortvriend introduced House Resolution 5563 requesting that RI Dept of Ed infuse K-12 curriculum with key environmental and climate principles. “Kids across the state have contacted me asking about how they can help make sure this happens. They realize the importance of climate literacy and their interest has inspired me to continue to work on this issue.”



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LETTER FROM TERRI

Dear Neighbors:

I am honored to have been elected to serve as your representative in the RI House of Representatives and am writing to you to share with you some of the goings-on in Providence this past legislative 2019 session and what is coming up in the 2020 legislative session.

In January 2019, I served as a member of the Reform Caucus. **Our mission was focused on making recommendations for changes to the House Rules that would improve transparency and accountability.**

We proposed recommendations that included a requirement for all Bills and Sub A’s be posted online and available to the public 48 hours in advance of any vote in committee or on the floor – in the end **24 hours was approved.** We also recommended that the rules could only be suspended by a 2/3 majority of votes in the House instead of being approved by the Speaker and the Minority leader. While the 2/3 majority measure was not voted out of the Rules Committee, it is very important to note that the Rules were not suspended at the end of this session which meant that **the 24 hour rule prevailed.** The reform caucus **also advocated for the creation of the Office of Inspector General and enacting a Line Item Veto.** While neither of these were approved, the **FY 2020 budget did provide additional investigatory powers to the Office of the Auditor General to pursue suspected cases of fraud, waste and abuse.**


The General Assembly passed a suite of four major education reform bills. One included giving principals more authority through site based management. The second included a requirement that the commissioner set up statewide standards and identify high quality curriculum for those standards in the core subjects. The third included setting up a fast track path for principals to become certified and the fourth bill will require elementary teachers to be proficient in scientific reading instruction. The legislature codified Roe v Wade into state law.

It was a disappointment that the legislature did not approve one environmental bill in this past session. I received many emails from you in support of a plastic bag ban that didn’t preempt individual towns from having ordinances with stronger provisions. I also heard from many of you expressing support of Save the Bays efforts to establish an Ocean State Coastal Adaptation and Resilience (OSCAR) Fund that could generate nearly \$2 million a year for projects that protect natural resources and public access by increasing the petroleum import fees collected in our ports from 5 to 10 cents per barrel (42 gallons).
You can read more about it here at <https://www.savebay.org/2019-legislative-update/>

Since the session ended I have spent time meeting with organizations, municipal leaders and constituents, attended town council meetings, participated in national webinars and conference calls. I have met with the Governor and the Division of Public Utilities Commission multiple times regarding the gas outage. I have also met with RIDOT officials and participated in Portsmouth’s East Main Road Safety Audit. I have **attended all the meetings of Senate’s Task Force on our state Educational Funding Formula.** I have **held monthly coffee hours** and **created an Aquidneck Island Climate Caucus** with Newport Representative Lauren Carson.

Please reach out any time you have a problem or a question. You can follow me on Twitter, Facebook and/or Instagram. You can email me if you would like to receive my digital newsletters and notifications. You can **find my 2020 schedule for “Talks with Terri” on my website.** Finally, **I invite you to fill out my newest online survey which can be found easily on the home page of my website at www.terricortvriend.com.**

Sincerely, 

Rep. Terri Cortvriend
46 Mary Lane
Portsmouth, RI 02971


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