

# Middlesex Coalition for CHILDREN

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End of Year Report  
2015

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Prepared by Izzi Greenberg and Ulysses Estrada

## Mission Statement

The Middlesex Coalition for Children's mission is to improve the lives of children growing up in Middletown and Middlesex County. The Coalition holds public meetings monthly on issues important to children. It convenes task forces to mobilize and coordinate community efforts to address specific children's issues, and advocates for children at the local, state and national levels.

We thank our current funders:

Community Foundation of Middlesex County

Fund for Greater Hartford

Graustein Memorial Foundation

Liberty Bank Foundation

Tow Foundation

## 2014-2015 Advisory Board

Eileen Baker, Justin Carbonella, Patricia Charles, Terri DiPietro, Daniel Drew, Alice Ellovich, Christine Fahey, Jayne Gary, Allon Kalisher, Cathy Crimmins Lechowicz, Vincent Loffredo, Donna Marino, Adrienne Maslin, Willard McRae, Mary Pont, Jeffrey Pugliese, Michelle Rulnick, Lisa Sedlock-Reider, Jessica Stewart, Betty Sugerman Weintraub, Kevin Wilhelm

Izzi Greenberg: Staff  
Ulysses Estrada: Associate

# Annual Summary

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## Extraordinary Challenges and Accomplishments:

This year our coalition dug deep into important issues in our committee work, ran an extremely valuable childhood hunger study and worked closely with our legislative delegation on the most important advocacy issue of the year: the state budget.

We started the year getting to know our possible delegates at our first candidates forum, which hosted many of the people running for office in Middlesex County. We maintained conversation with many of those candidates as they turned into delegates. We worked with them to stress the impact of the state budget on our communities and focused our legislative breakfast on educating our members to the harsh reality of the state budget. Our keynote speaker, Nick DeFiesta from CT Voices for Children, gave us a tour of the ins and outs of the budget and outlined possible areas for revenue generation. All along, we kept close ties with members of our delegation, new and old.

As we got deeper into the year, we spent a lot of time and effort collecting and beginning the work of analyzing data so that we have solid evidence as a basis moving forward in our work over the coming years.

From our committees and partners, we learned that rates of childhood hunger are growing, that the disparity between high and low income residents is getting bigger, and rates of families in poverty are rising. But we also learned that through the strength of our community and the bonds of partnership that our agencies share, we are able to support our most vulnerable families at growing rates. Sadly, there is still a gap, but many are working hard to keep up with our growing need.

Our Family Support Committee spent the year learning about the landscape for homeless families in Middlesex County. They heard from experts about obtaining housing, the role of our schools, and what community supports exist for struggling families.

We ran public meetings, maintaining the most visible work of the coalition. The design, planning and execution of these meetings was conscientious, relevant, and brought important children's issues to our membership community. They have remained a bridge to our members, our legislative delegation, and to our advocacy partners.

We maintained an Advocacy Committee, a Childhood Hunger Task Force, and a Family Support Committee. We participated in partner commissions and coalitions. We supervised a 10-hour per week work-study student, as well as a graduate level intern and an AmeriCorps VISTA. We maintained relationships with statewide partners and on top of it all, we have a new, more useful website to help share information with our members.

# Public Meetings

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**The Coalition had 9 scheduled Public Meetings. Below is the list of topics, speakers and attendance.**

September: Annual Open Mic on new developments in children's services.  
Attendance: 50

October: Candidate's Forum  
Dante Bartolomeo, Emily Bjornberg, Paul Doyle, Noreen Kokoruda, Matt Lesser, Art Linares, Phil Miller, Joe Serra, Len Suzio, Alex Taubes, Tom Vicino, Melissa Ziobron  
Attendance: 80

November: DCF Pueblo Facility for Girls  
William Rosenbeck, Superintendent Connecticut Juvenile Training School  
Kristy Ramsey, Assistant Superintendent, Pueblo Unit  
Allon Kallisher, DCF Region 3 Supervisor  
Attendance: 50

December: Implementing Two-Generational Strategies  
Liz Fraser, Policy Analyst at Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS)  
State Representative Noreen Kokoruda  
State Representative Phil Miller  
Attendance: 50

January: Juvenile Justice & Second Look Legislation: *Canceled Due To Snow*

February: CT Food Justice Youth Corps  
James Boyle: CT-FJYC VISTA Leader  
Jiff Martin: Project Coordinator for the CT Food Justice Youth Corps VISTA Project and Uconn Extension Educator  
Sasha Rosen-Buell: VISTA Middletown, CT-FJYC  
Attendance: 35

March: Legislative Breakfast: Focus on State Budget  
Keynote: Nick DeFiesta, CT Voices for Children, Fiscal Policy Fellow  
Doyle, Formica, Lesser, Miller, Serra  
Attendance: 100

April: Maternal-Child Life Course Approach to Preventing Childhood Obesity  
Dr. Rafael Perez-Escamilla of the Yale School of Public Health.  
Attendance: 50

May: Family Economic and Food Security  
Ed Bonilla, Middlesex United Way, ALICE Presentation  
Wesleyan Research Team, Food Insecurity Study Presentation  
Attendance: 60

Average Attendance for Public Meetings: 60

# Advisory Board Representation

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Our board members were represented in towns across the county.

<b>Town</b>	<b>Number of members working there</b>
Chester	8
Clinton	9
Cromwell	11
Deep River	8
Durham	10
East Haddam	9
East Hampton	10
Essex	9
Haddam	9
Killingworth	8
Middlefield	10
Middletown	15
Old Saybrook	11
Portland	12
Westbrook	9
Other	2

Board members participated in a variety of activities:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Number of Members Participating</b>
Statewide Advocacy	10
Local Advocacy	15
Direct Service	6
Program Administration/Oversight	11
Other	5

# Why The Coalition?

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In a year with a very tight state budget, shared resources and shared advocacy has been solidified as a necessary way forward for many of the large and small agencies working across the county and state to affect outcomes for children.

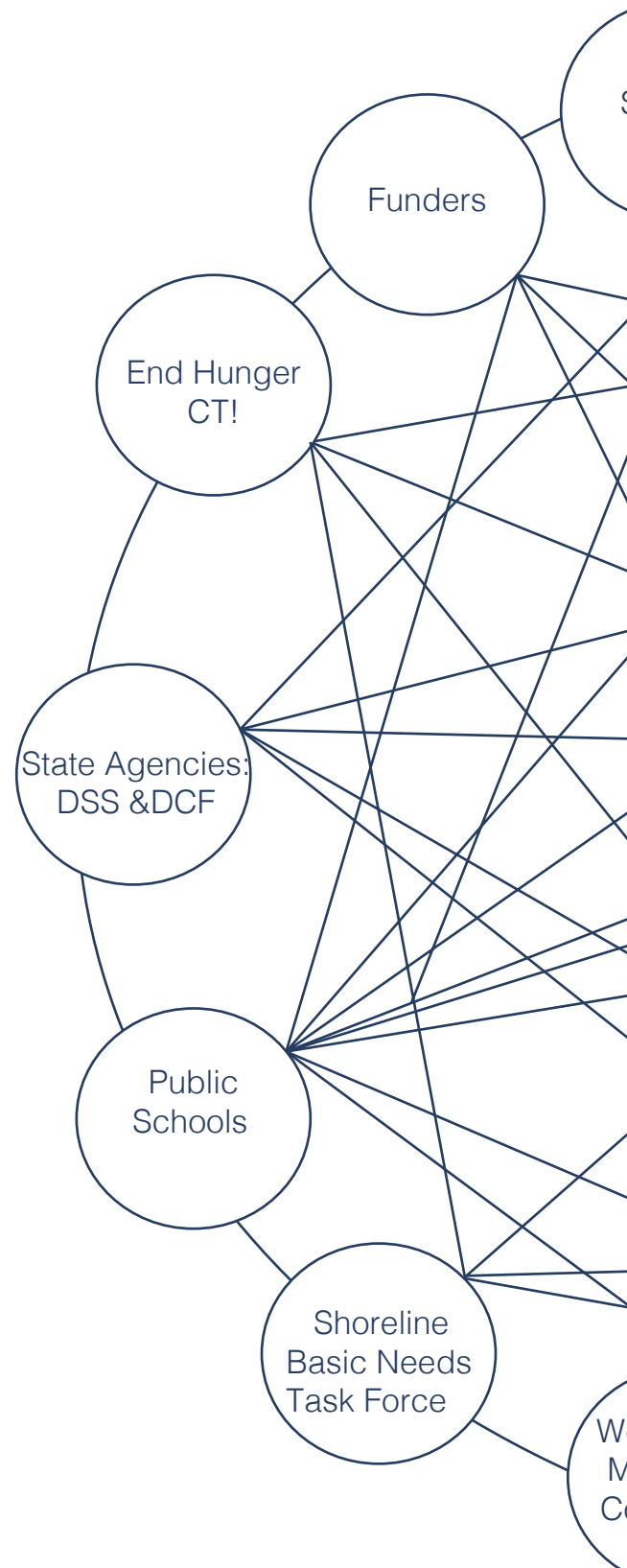
As a coalition, our biggest successes were ones we couldn't have had and wouldn't have been able to accomplish without deep and meaningful partnerships. From data measurement to advocacy, our coalition is just that: a collection of agencies and individuals working together committed to a common cause.

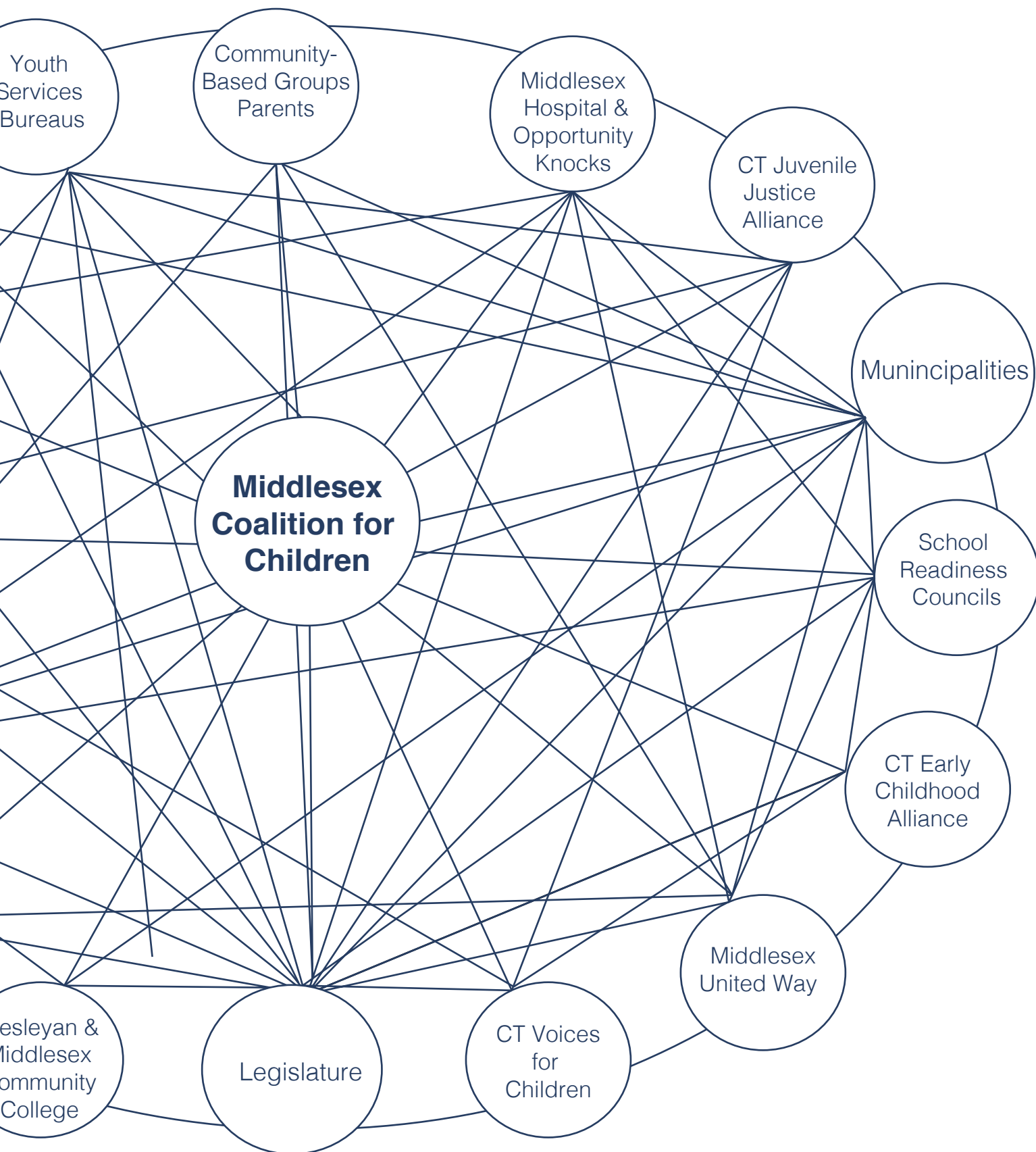
Each of our members and each of our partners has its own self interest, it's own work, but the coalition's cause is bigger. We work to improve outcomes for low-income children.

The idea is broad and all-encompassing and it transcends the work of each of our members on their own.

So, while our coalition wouldn't exist without its members, for many of the issues we work on, our members wouldn't have the opportunity to come together without our coalition. We are the one common element in much of Middletown and Middlesex County's work on important children's issues and we are the group helping to make and maintain these connections.

The effort our members put forward is magnified by the meaningful partnerships the coalition has helped to cultivate. The greatest strength of the coalition is that we are able to work in partnership with many Middletown, Middlesex County, and statewide agencies to support them, increase our collective impact, and maintain a platform for conversation.





## Early Childhood

- Worked through the School Readiness Transportation Committee to improve the transportation infrastructure for parents with young children in Middletown which has led to a partnership with the Complete Street Committee
- Participated on Opportunity Knocks Behavioral Health Work group and Steering Committee
- Participated on the School Readiness Council
- Worked to expand Child First in our region
- Participated on the Early Head Start Advisory Committee
- Participate on Better Choices for Connecticut work around the state budget
- Participated with a Middletown team in a year-round learning symposium
- Early Childhood Alliance Member and Advocacy Committee Chair
- Supported Early Childhood Advocacy Day

## Juvenile Justice

- Organized forums to educate our members on the new DCF Pueblo Unit for girls
- Color of Justice Follow Up (see “general” below)
- Worked on the Professional Development Subcommittee of the LIST to bring a trauma-based approach training to Middletown providers
- Participated on the LIST, the regional Juvenile Justice/Mental Health Collaborative
- Worked with CT ACLU to recruit participants and market their Lobby Day at the Capitol
- Testified to educate the Middletown Board of Ed on other factors to think about when considering “search and seizure” policy to allow police searches of Middletown Schools. This has become an issue statewide and we have worked with the CT Juvenile Justice Alliance on it.
- Helped facilitate a conversation on Wesleyan Public Safety/Community Youth Relations with the Youth Service Bureau to implement uniform, community-based trespassing procedures

## Family Support

- Ran a series of meetings to educate our members on housing issues as they relate to children and families(Housing Authority, Homelessness, McKinny-Vento Act)
- Took on Chronic Absenteeism work as the Element 3 Work group of the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Grant through the Middletown Public Schools
- Participated in DCF Middletown Advisory Board
- Worked on the ACES Head Start Grant, connected the process to a possible site
- Participated in DCF Connect
- Served on the Health Services Advisory Committee
- Worked with the City of Middletown on a grant to expand recreational opportunities for low-income children as a way to decrease childhood obesity

## Childhood Nutrition

- Supervised a team from the Wesleyan Community Research Seminar to conduct a family food insecurity study of Middletown
- Began a campaign to increase the rate of students who are “directly certified” by the Federal Government. This increase can make it possible for Middletown to implement universal free lunch in some Middletown schools
- Worked to increase Farmers Market SNAP/WIC usage
- Presented a webinar through End Hunger CT! on community engagement around childhood nutrition and farmers market usage



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- Shared & supervised a VISTA Volunteer to work on youth organizing around food justice
  - Participated in the Shoreline Soup Kitchen Basic Needs Task Force Hunger Subcommittee
  - Worked with service providers from Middlesex County to explore a county-wide food policy council
  - Participate on the CT Food Policy Council Hunger work group
  - Established a new Prescription for Produce program with Middlesex Hospital to provide fresh food to low-income families

### **Advocacy**

- Dug deep into the state budget to make it simple and easy for our members to understand
- Monitored the ongoing process of passing the state budget and the impact on children in our community
- Testified on behalf of our community at the state legislature
- Worked with state partners to support and expand successful Two Generational Programs
- Helped with the campaign for working wages for early childhood workers
- Worked with Bielefeld School on legislative advocacy education campaign for their family support programs
- Helped design and promote the “We Vote for Kids” Campaign of the Early Childhood Alliance
- Created Legislative Breakfast sponsorship structure to spread the expense and impact of the event

### **General**

- Collected data from roughly 50 community partners to consolidate into a single report
- Began follow up work on the Color of Justice with a diverse coalition of statewide partners. The goal is have community members trained in implicit bias facilitation to begin this work in Middletown
- Helped to stabilize Oddfellows Playhouse as a part of the volunteer management team
- Spoke to the DCF Regional Advisory Council on the work of the coalition
- Sat on the Middlesex Community College Regional Advisory Council to the President
- Continued to work as a Russell Library Board Member
- Participate in Safe Schools/Healthy Students Grant/CMT of the Middletown Public Schools
- Began work with the Open Communities Alliance to expand the opportunity gap for low income families
- Promoted the United Way Alice Report
- Continued to meet as part of the local team working with Wesleyan to stabilize and secure the Upward Bound and other College Readiness Programs
- Attended Liberty Bank Collective Impact Workshop







### **Possible Work for Next Year**

- Make county-wide improvements to Family Economic Security
- Use our childhood hunger study to inform ongoing work around childhood hunger
- Analyze and release data project and present it to decision makers
- Expand the reach and understanding of the United Way ALICE report
- Organize and launch Color of Justice follow-up work
- Chair the Early Childhood Alliance Advocacy Committee
- Decrease the Opportunity Gap for Middletown and Middlesex County children
- Work to reduce Chronic Absenteeism: Element 3 of Safe Schools/Healthy Students
- Work on a financial sustainability plan for the coalition.











# 2014-2015 Legislative Voting Record

Our Coalition Members worked hard to establish good relationships with our legislative delegation. The following grid shows how each member of our delegation voted on the bills that were most important to our mission.

*\*\*The voting record will be up for revision once the legislative session officially concludes.*

Bills of Interest	 Altobello (D)	 Bartolomeo (D)	 Candelora (R)	 Carney (R)	 Carpino (R)	 Doyle (D)
Budget Vote	N	Y	N	N	N	N
HB6834 AN ACT CONCERNING COLLABORATION BETWEEN BOARDS OF EDUCATION AND SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS AND THE COLLECTION AND REPORTING OF DATA ON SCHOOL-BASED ARRESTS.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
HB7020: AN ACT CONCERNING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS AND INITIATIVES.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	C; Y
SB795: AN ACT CONCERNING A TWO-GENERATIONAL SCHOOL READINESS AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PILOT PROGRAM.	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
SB841: AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A COMPREHENSIVE CHILDREN'S MENTAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PLAN	Y	C; Y	C; Y	Y	Y	Y
SB843: AN ACT CONCERNING TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE TRAINING FOR TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS AND PUPIL PERSONNEL.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB1053: AN ACT CONCERNING OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS AND EXPULSIONS FOR STUDENTS IN PRESCHOOL AND GRADES KINDERGARTEN TO TWO.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB1101: AN ACT CONCERNING THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

- Y: Yes
- N: No
- X: No Vote/ No Voting Record. For many bills, either the Senate or House voted.
- Passed
- C: Co-Sponsor of Bill

									
Fasano (R)	Formica (R)	Kennedy (D)	Kokoruda (R)	Lesser (D)	Linares (R)	MacLachlan (R)	Miller (D)	Serra (D)	Ziobron (R)
N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N
Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	C; Y	Y
Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	C; Y	Y	Y	Y
Y	Y	C; Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	X	Y	Y	C; Y	Y
Y	Y	Y	Y	X	Y	Y	Y	C; Y	Y
Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

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