

SENATOR
BECCA RAUSCH
NORFOLK • BRISTOL • MIDDLESEX

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Senator Rausch's End-of-Session Beacon Hill Review

I am very proud to have accomplished so much on behalf of my constituents during my first term in the Senate, including a robust COVID-19 response, billions of dollars invested into our Commonwealth's communities, and broad spectrum reforms in education, elections, and reproductive justice.

COVID-19: My top priority has been [keeping you and your family safe throughout this crisis](#). Since I took office in 2019, my team and I have worked on over 700 constituent cases – including nearly 150 COVID-19 unemployment cases – helping individuals receive the supports they deserve, especially during these difficult times. From hosting weekly virtual office hours to issuing over 30 COVID-19 newsletters, I strived to remain accessible to my constituents even while physically distant. Early in the pandemic, in coalition with my colleagues, I publicly pressured Governor Baker to close our public schools, issue a stay-at-home order, and authorize emergency licensure to foreign-trained medical professionals. I continue to press the Baker administration to ensure every resident living in a persistently “red zone” municipality has access to free, asymptomatic COVID-19 testing. In addition, Governor Baker must implement other evidence-based measures immediately to protect personal and public health, especially since vaccination distribution will take at least six to nine months.

COVID-19 Legislative Victories: I led the charge to bring mail-in ballots to Massachusetts by crafting, filing, and strenuously advocating for comprehensive vote-by-mail legislation. My [2020 Vote By Mail Act](#) included universal automatic mail-in voting, postage guaranteed on every ballot, voter education and outreach, and PPE for poll workers, among other key provisions. Many components of my bill ended up in the final 2020 vote-by-mail law, which expires at the end of the year. In January, I will file legislation to make comprehensive vote by mail permanent in our Commonwealth. Also, as the Senate Chair of the Municipalities and Regional Government Committee, I successfully advanced multiple bills to support our municipalities during this pandemic, including a prohibition on municipal utility shutoffs like water, sewer, and trash, all of which became law.

Advancing Reproductive Freedom in MA: I've been an outspoken advocate for reproductive freedom throughout my tenure in the Senate. Two of my bills to advance reproductive justice – reducing racial disparities in maternal health and expanding access to home birth midwifery care – both passed the Senate by unanimous, bipartisan votes. In addition, my colleagues and I passed critical legislation to ensure and enhance abortion access in our Commonwealth, striking medically unnecessary barriers to abortion, creating access to abortion care in the unimaginably difficult circumstance of a fatal fetal diagnosis, and prohibiting the Commonwealth from interfering with a person's decision to terminate their own pregnancy. Disappointingly, Governor Baker vetoed these abortion access provisions, and I proudly voted with sufficient majorities of my colleagues to override that veto.

FY 2021 Budget: The Legislature approved a \$46 billion budget to support fiscal stability throughout this crisis. My colleagues and I maintained the same funding as last year for all school departments, cities, and

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towns so that no municipality faces budget cuts while serving their residents in this tremendous time of need. This year, I also secured \$250,000 for my district's schools to support necessary adaptations due to COVID-19, in addition to the \$250,000 in adaptation funds for our district I secured in the COVID-19 supplemental budget passed earlier this year. Funding I secured in Fiscal Year 2020 was maintained in the FY 2021 budget, including supports for local Councils on Aging and \$1 million for the Healthy Relationships Grant Program to prevent teen dating violence.

Education Reform and Pre-COVID Policy Victories: Prior to the pandemic, there were many policy victories to celebrate: banning conversion therapy and the sale of flavored tobacco products; lifting the welfare cap on kids to support Massachusetts' low-income families; and investing \$1.8 billion in our Commonwealth's infrastructure. In 2019, we also passed the landmark Student Opportunity Act, the first overhaul of the state's education funding formula in the last 30 years. This historic bill authorizes an unprecedented \$1.5 billion per year of new investment in our schools, ensuring that every district has the resources to support our teachers and provide high-quality education to students regardless of zip code, income level, first language, or special needs.

Looking Forward: While we celebrate these successes amidst significant hardship, there is still so much work to be done. We must robustly address the expired eviction moratorium and our housing affordability crisis, including foreclosure relief. Restaurants, retailers, and other small businesses are still hurting due to COVID-19, and we must find better ways to help keep them afloat through this pandemic. With only weeks to go before the session ends, we still have multiple bills on issues critical to daily life – like health care and economic development – still waiting to become law. In the upcoming session, I'll keep putting my proven leadership to work for you to advance election reform, infectious disease prevention, health care access, supporting families, and more.

It is my great honor to serve the Norfolk, Bristol and Middlesex District in the Massachusetts State Senate, and I am excited to roll up my sleeves and continue our work together in the next legislative session this January. Please reach out to me if you have fallen on hard times and need assistance, have thoughts on policy, or want to check in. My office line is 617-722-1555, my email is becca.rausch@masenate.gov, and you can sign up for a personal office hours appointment at beccaraushma.com/office-hours.

As 2020 comes to a close, I wish you and your loved ones strength, health, and resilience and look forward to everything we will accomplish together next term.

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Senator Becca Rausch represents the Norfolk, Bristol and Middlesex District, comprised of Attleboro, Franklin, Millis, Natick, Needham, Norfolk, North Attleborough, Plainville, Sherborn, Wayland, Wellesley, and Wrentham. Currently in her first term, Senator Rausch serves as the Senate Chair of the

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*Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government and the Senate Vice Chair of the Joint
Committee on Elder Affairs.*