The governor last week stood before the General Assembly to release his 2024-2025 budget proposal, and a core theme of his speech to the assembled crowd of state representatives and senators was the need to build economic growth.

I couldn’t agree more.

That mission, however, is easier said than done.

We face many challenges, some of which were highlighted in a report that generated a recent headline you may have seen that decried, “Connecticut 2nd Worst State to Start a Business.” Such pronouncements have been common here for more than a decade, and whether you appreciate the sources—this time, it was financial website WalletHub—it’s hard to ignore the consistent conclusion.

Among the factors typically analyzed are cost of living, housing availability, taxes, regulations, or transportation. While Connecticut typically trumps most other states in categories such as education and access to skilled labor, it’s our costly red tape that usually sparks poor marks for the Nutmeg state.

The Governor’s budget proposal has received positive reviews from the state’s business community, particularly for adopting the Republican push for the full restoration of the pass-through entity tax credit. While the plan’s failure to honor the expected sunset of the much-maligned 10 percent corporation surcharge is a disappointment, the governor’s attempt to tackle the childcare shortage affecting workers by incentivizing more on-site care at businesses has garnered early nods.

Scratch the surface, however, and you’ll see a barrier. It’s the legislature. Specifically, progressive Democrats who have grown in number and influence.

A bevy of anti-employer proposals threaten to undermine the effort to improve our state’s business climate, such as allowing striking workers to secure unemployment benefits from the fund employers pay into!

It’s hard to believe that what amounts to paying workers to go on strike will do much to enhance our state’s reputation as a place where businesses can thrive, nor would preventing an owner of a warehouse from setting a quota that would help the employer judge the productivity of a worker. What message are we sending by increasing the amount of unemployment fraud someone can commit before being charged with a felony?

Connecticut didn’t land in a place where it scores poorly in business surveys overnight—it’s a result of years of wrongheaded policies. Consequently, changing our state’s reputation will require the overwhelming majority of us to row in the same direction if we want true economic growth.

But in a legislature where a proposal to prevent a sit-down mom and pop restaurant from putting a straw in your drink—unless you explicitly ask for one—generates more enthusiasm than simply reducing business filing fees?

It seems unlikely we’ll see much movement in our WalletHub ranking any time soon.

**Rep. Vincent Candelora
House Republican Leader 86th District
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