Back in early February, when the General Assembly and Governor made headlines for extending the “fiscal guardrails” that have contributed greatly to Connecticut’s robust savings account, much of the focus centered upon how long the bipartisan fiscal controls would remain on the books.

First passed in 2017, the controls were designed to keep state spending in line with changes in inflation or personal income, while also creating a revenue cap that prevents lawmakers from creating budgets with little room for financial error. What’s more, a volatility cap captured spikes in revenue tied heavily to a variety of investment earnings, helping to build the large surplus we have today.

Less of a focus in February’s news was the integrity of said guardrails, with Republicans raising concern that Democrats who control the legislature’s money committees could manipulate the rules to achieve their budget goals.

Fast forward two months, and that’s where we find ourselves today. In a move that even drew rebuke from Gov. Lamont, General Assembly Democrats have done exactly what we feared. They’d like to use a well-worn accounting scheme to slip through those guardrails, to “intercept” and spend revenue before it hits the budget and is subjected to the bipartisan rules on spending.

Like Republicans, Governor Lamont branded it a “gimmick.” Legislative Democrats, meanwhile, call the move a “creative financial structure.”

No matter how you slice it, fact is that Democrats have made mincemeat of the spirit of the original guardrails as well as February’s extension.

Considering that, as well as the lack of meaningful tax relief in their plan, my House Republican colleagues and I crafted our own budget proposal.

You view many of the details at taxreliefbudget.com.

First and foremost, our plan seeks to make our state more affordable through a structural middle class tax cut that’s retroactive to 2023. It would create, for the first time, a state child tax deduction while also eliminating the year-round tax on children’s clothing under $100. Republicans also propose to install a phase-out threshold for the tax on retirement income, tackling the $100,000 income cliff that has understandably frustrated many residents.

Our plan, vetted by nonpartisan budget analysts, preserves our state’s social safety net by increasing funding for nonprofit providers Connecticut relies upon to offer crucial services to residents in need. Additionally, our budget makes tremendous financial investments in local education funding.

The House Republican budget would reinstitute and invest money in a Transportation Strategy Board to achieve long-term savings through more organized and efficient project planning, and we’d increase funding for gun violence prevention programs and food vouchers for senior citizens.

Among the varied ways our plan realizes savings to achieve the priorities described above is to eliminate hundreds of job positions that state agencies build into their budgets but have been unable to fill. Additionally, we’d eliminate a proposed $3.5 million text messaging program for inmates, and we’d tackle the exploding costs of state-funded healthcare for undocumented immigrants.

Negotiations to deliver a final budget for consideration in both the House and Senate are now underway, and I’ll update you when details become clearer.

As always, feel free to contact my office if you have questions or concerns about the budget or any other issue related to state government.

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

**North Branford, Durham, East Haven, Guilford**