**2021 NASW Advocacy Training**

**Legislator Biographies**

**Representative Jillian Gilchrest**

**18th District, West Hartford**

**Representative Jillian Gilchrest** was elected to represent the 18th District of West Hartford in the Connecticut General Assembly (CGA) in 2018. She serves as Vice Chair of the Public Health Committee and on the Appropriations and Energy & Technologies Committees. Jillian Chairs the MAPOC Subcommittee on Women & Children’s Health and the Trafficking in Persons Council.

Prior to becoming a state representative, Jillian served as the Director of Health Professional Outreach for the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Executive Director of NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut, and Director of Policy & Communications for the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence. She has extensive experience advocating for women’s health and safety, in particular influencing public policy at the CGA.

Jillian was elected to the West Hartford Board of Education in 2013. She holds a Masters Degree in Social Work with a focus in Policy Practice from the University of Connecticut School of Social Work, where she has taught Political Advocacy. Jillian currently teaches for the University of Saint Joseph, University of Hartford, and Sacred Heart University. Jillian serves on the Board of Girls on the Run of Greater Hartford and the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, Inc. She resides with her two children in West Hartford.

Jillian Serves on the Appropriations, Energy and Technology, Judiciary and Public Health Committees. She is Vice Chair of Public Health.

**State Representative Kathleen McCarty**

**38th General Assembly District, Waterford, Montville**

**State Representative Kathleen McCarty** represents the 38th General Assembly District covering Waterford and Montville, and is currently serving her fourth two-year term. State Rep. McCarty serves as Ranking Member of the [Education](http://www.cga.ct.gov/ed) Committee, and is a member of the [Appropriations](http://www.cga.ct.gov/app) and [Public Health](http://www.cga.ct.gov/ph) Committee. Ranking members serve as a liaison to caucus members regarding the important issues from each individual committee.

McCarty provides a voice for residents of the 38th District during Public Health Committee discussions surrounding health matters such as emergency medical services, licensing boards, nursing homes, pure food and drugs, mental health, controlled substances, treatment of substance abuse.

As Ranking Member of the Education Committee, McCarty will lead members on all matters relating to the Department of Education; local and regional boards of education and the substantive law of collective bargaining covering teachers and professional employees of such boards; vocational rehabilitation; the Commission on the Arts; and libraries, museums and historical and cultural associations.

On the Appropriations Committee, McCarty and her colleagues oversee budgets of state agencies, collective bargaining, and salaries, benefits and retirement of state employees, teachers and veterans.

McCarty received her Bachelor of Arts from Sacred Heart University, a Master of Arts in Teaching French from Fairfield University, and a Master of Arts in Medieval Studies from Fordham University. She was also a graduate student at Purdue University’s Ph.D. Studies Program in French and was a former Ph.D. (ABD) Candidate French Program student at the University of Connecticut.

McCarty’s professional experience includes work as a CT High School French Teacher, Co-Pilot, Family Business Co-Owner, Sports Coach and Assistant to the Fordham University Medieval Studies Program Director.

Her numerous volunteer activities include serving as a Former Chairman to Thames Valley Council for Community Action (TVCCA), Member of the Board of Trustees, Former Member of the USS Connecticut Commissioning Committee, Chairman for the Waterford Board of Education, Founder of the Waterford Education Foundation, Chairman of the Waterford Republican Town Committee, Civil Air Patrol Major, and Member of the Board of Directors of the National & Connecticut Federations of Republican Women.

McCarty is also a member of professional organizations such as the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education and National School Board Association, Women in Aviation International, and Société des Professeurs Français et Francophone d’Amérique.

As the Former Chairman to the Board of Education, McCarty is the recipient of several awards from the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE). She has also received several leadership awards from the Eastern Connecticut Regional Mental Health Board.

A small business owner, Waterford resident McCarty is a mother to two adult daughters and a grandmother to three grandchildren.

**State Representative Cristin McCarthy Vahey**

**133rd District, Fairfield**

**State Representative Cristin McCarthy Vahey** is serving her fourth term representing Fairfield's 133rd Assembly District. She is House Chair of the Planning and Development Committee and a member of the Government Administration and Elections and Transportation Committees.

Since her election to local office in 2005 and now as a legislator, Cristin has been committed to helping her community and our state thrive: planning for and creating healthy, safe and vibrant communities, supporting economic development and diversity, improving voter access and participation, and advocating for mental health and wellness initiatives.

In Cristin' role as the Planning and Development Committee Chair, she has been integral in modernizing and re-organizing zoning statutes to provide greater clarity and tools to local planning and zoning officials, empower towns and cities to facilitate economic growth, ensure inclusive communities, add energy and environmental protections to their zoning codes, and allow accessory dwelling units across the state. Cristin spearheaded legislation that creates a state Geographic Information Systems (GIS) office and advisory council, allows access to original birth certificates for all adult adoptees, and streamlines access for outdoor dining.

As a member of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, Cristin worked with committee leadership to expand voter accessibility, restoring voting rights to those on parole, and giving the CT voters the chance to vote on two Constitutional Amendments: one for early voting and the other to provide no-excuse absentee ballots to registered voters.

Cristin’s long-term advocacy on behalf of both public transit and active transportation, and safety resulted in a requirement for the use of back seat seatbelts for all ages and a groundbreaking bill for pedestrian and bicycle safety. The bill creates the nation’s first statewide Vision Zero council and provides multiple safeguards for those who walk and bike to work, school, or pursue exercise or recreational opportunities.

As long-time co-chair of Fairfield CARES Community Coalition, Cristin has spent over a decade working on youth wellness promotion and substance misuse prevention. She is a certified QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) suicide prevention trainer. Her past volunteer service in multiple community organizations includes scouting, church groups, and civic organizations.

Educated at the University of Notre Dame and the University of Washington in the Master of Social Work program, she and her husband, Brian are parents to three children, all of whom attend or have been through Fairfield Public Schools

#### State Senator Rick Lopes

#### 24th District, New Britain

In 2020, Rick Lopes was elected to represent the 6th Senate district which covers Berlin, New Britain, and parts of Farmington. Prior to that, Rick represented the 24th Assembly district in New Britain. He was first elected to that post in 2012.

In 1994, he served as a community organizer in the Broad Street neighborhood. Starting as the staff for the Broad Street Collaborative, a group of residents and business owners, Rick was instrumental in transforming the Broad Street group into the state’s first Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ).

After the successful organizing career, Rick went on to a position as a housing coordinator at the Middletown Chapter of the American Red Cross and then as a vocational counselor at the Chrysalis Center in Hartford, an agency offering employment support to adults with mental illness. Rick also worked at the State Capitol from 2003-2011 as the legislative aide for Sen. Don DeFronzo who chaired the Government Administration and Elections Committee and the Transportation Committee. Rick also worked as project manager for the Department of Administrative Services.

Since 1993, Rick has run a small property management and maintenance business that operates in West Hartford, New Britain and Hartford. Rick has a bachelor’s degree in English literature and bachelor’s degree in Sociology from UConn. In addition, he has a Masters Degree in Social Work (MSW) from UConn.

Rick began his political career by running his own successful campaign for New Britain City Council in 2003 (while an MSW student at UConn).

#### Rick chairs the Housing Committee and is the Vice Chair of the Aging Committee. He additionally serves on the Appropriations; Higher Education& Employment Advancement; Planning & Development; Transportation committees.

**State Senator Gary Winfield**

**10th District, New Haven and West Haven**

Originally sworn in on February 28, 2014, Gary Winfield is serving his fifth term as a Connecticut State Senator.

Prior to his time in the state senate, Senator Winfield served an unprecedented three terms in the Connecticut House of Representatives, marked by passage of the state’s repeal of the death penalty, a transgender civil rights bill, education equity and campaign finance reform legislation.

As a state senator, Senator Winfield has been an instrumental leader in helping to reshape conversations surrounding criminal justice, juvenile justice and immigration policy. In 2015, Senator Winfield wrote and championed legislation aimed at reducing police use of force, including requiring the operation of body cameras and cultural competency training for all officers. In years that followed, Senator Winfield helped lead passage of legislation to raise the age at which juvenile arrestees could be tried as adults.

In 2018, after a series of high-profile incidents between residents and law enforcement, Senator Winfield led passage of two distinct pieces of legislation to improve community relationships with law enforcement and fortify trust in the state’s justice system during the 2019 legislative session. The first, House Bill 380, prohibits law enforcement officers from firing at a motor vehicle unless there is an imminent threat to the life of the officer or bystander and requires release of body cam footage after a deadly use of force accident; and Senate Bill 880, which increases prosecutorial transparency by requiring the state to collect, report, and publish information about prosecutors’ decisions on a public website each year.

In 2019, Senator Winfield’s passion for effective policy led him to draft and champion legislation permitting any state legislator to request the preparation of a racial and ethnic impact statement triggering the mandatory production of such statement, making Connecticut the first state in the nation to pass such a law. In addition to racial impact statements, Senator Winfield also engaged in an eight hour debate to protect and strengthen the Connecticut Trust Act, which passed both the House and Senate respectively.

Prior to serving in the Connecticut General Assembly, Senator Winfield voluntarily left both his positions as a field advisor for Alston Power Inc. and as an electrical construction manager for a power plant in Milford to assume the role of a community activist, operating among members of his community for social change.

Originally from the Bronx, Senator Winfield credits his experience of growing up in a tough environment, his father succumbing to drugs and watching his mother struggle as a single mother, as the source of his passion for social justice. He graduated from Southern Connecticut State University in 2006 with a Bachelor of Science degree in political science.

The senator currently resides in New Haven with his wife Rasheda and their four children, Heaven, Keyari, Gary and Imani.

Gary is the Chair of the Judiciary Committee, Vice Chair of the Energy and Technology Committee, and a member of the Appropriations, Education, Housing and General Law Committees.