



# LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

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*“Making Cape Cod a Better Place to Live and Work”*



State Representative Steve Xiarhos  
R - 5th Barnstable District  
Spring 2021

# WELCOME!

It has been my distinct honor and pleasure to serve as your State Representative since having been sworn into office on January 6 this year.

As I write this, Massachusetts families are still continuing to deal with the painful public health, economic, and education consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. I am hopeful that our state will be able to turn the page on the pandemic sometime soon and that we will be able to restore a sense of normalcy to our Commonwealth.

With that in mind, I am working hard to support the heroes who are part of this important recovery effort, and to promote policies that will make Cape Cod an even better place to live, work, and raise a family. My office also has worked extensively with constituents in need of assistance with unemployment and other issues due to the pandemic.

In the following pages, you will read more about some of the priorities I am already working on. This includes my work on legislative committees and bills that I have filed. I also believe strongly in the importance of constituent service, communication, and supporting the communities I represent.

True to my past work, I also continue to dedicate a time to volunteer for charities in our area. I believe strongly in the importance of giving back to the community at the same time I serve as an elected official.



Please know I am also making preparations to participate in our state's annual budget process later this Spring.

If there is ever any way that I can be of assistance to you, please do not hesitate to reach out to my office. My Legislative Aide and I are dedicated to serving you and using the power of my office to help you and the communities we hold dear. I pledge to always work hard on your behalf and to earn your trust, confidence, and support. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Xiarhos". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steve" and last name "Xiarhos" clearly legible.

Steven G. Xiarhos  
State Representative  
5th Barnstable District



## CONSTITUENT SERVICE

One of my most important jobs as a State Representative is to serve as a liaison between the constituents and communities I represent and state government.

To this end, during my first few weeks in office, I have worked on developing a formal program to keep in touch with local leaders, including town administrators, selectmen and councilors, and school committee members. It is important for us to share a regular dialogue regarding local needs and ways the state can support individual communities.

I have also started holding regular office hour sessions. These are dedicated times meant to facilitate direct communication with people in the 5th Barnstable District. It's a way for me to concentrate directly on what's important to them, problems they need help with, and priorities they want me to work on.

So far, most of these sessions have been virtual due to the pandemic. However, I look forward to expanding outreach and having a more formal district presence sometime in the near future, once COVID-related restrictions hopefully ease.

In all of these efforts, I am assisted by my Legislative Aide and Chief of Staff, Kaitlin Wright. Kaitlin is extremely talented, capable, and friendly, and her ability to work hard to solve problems is a tremendous benefit for the people of the 5th Barnstable District. I appreciate everything she does and the help she has already provided to so many people we serve.

If you are in need of assistance from my office, please contact Kaitlin at (617) 722-2800, ext. 7303, or via e-mail at [Kaitlin.Wright@mahouse.gov](mailto:Kaitlin.Wright@mahouse.gov). We are hopeful to have formal State House office space assigned to our office sometime in the near future.



## COMMITTEES

**E**very member of the House serves on one or more legislative committees. These committees each have jurisdiction over particular subject matters and are tasked primarily with holding hearings regarding proposed legislation and recommending whether those bills ought to pass.

I am fortunate to serve on four committees this session, each of which has relevance not only to the 5th Barnstable District but also to matters that are important to me and fit well with my professional experience:

As a member of the **Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security**, I plan to work hard to make Cape Cod a safer place to live and work. As a former Deputy Police Chief with four decades of law enforcement experience, I feel I have a unique perspective to bring to this committee and its work. I also want to make sure that our state always does everything it can to honor and support first responders.

I will use my service as **Ranking Minority Member on the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs** to promote the interests of citizens who served in uniform. The pandemic has highlighted the important needs of our veterans, including quality health care and stable employment. We owe a special debt of gratitude to those who served and sacrificed. That obligation is especially meaningful to me as a Gold Star Father. I have made an extensive commitment to our veterans on a volunteer basis in memory of my son, and it is my honor and pleasure to carry this work forward to committee work as a legislator.

As a member of the **Joint Committee on Elder Affairs**, I will work hard to advocate for seniors across the Commonwealth. We have a substantial population of older individuals in the 5th Barnstable District, and we need to be especially concerned about the quality of care and housing they receive, the costs of living they face, and the services available to them.

Likewise, I plan to use my service as **Ranking Minority Member on the Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight** to help minimize the regulatory burdens facing Massachusetts residents and businesses. The purpose of this committee is to make sure that Massachusetts government operates effectively and efficiently, in the best interests of the people it serves, and to make sure whatever regulations are put in place are smart, fair, and limited only to what is necessary. I want to take an active role in that process on behalf of Massachusetts taxpayers and small businesses.

Just last week, I was also appointed to serve on a special legislative commission that will investigate and study the impact to the administration of justice of the qualified immunity doctrine in the Commonwealth.

As these committees begin their important work this Spring, things may be a little different due to the pandemic. However, the work of these committees is important and must get underway. I don't want to waste any time before getting involved actively, learning more about how these committees work, and asking a lot of questions.

## *Serving the Community in Time of Need*

**A**s a Gold Star Father and a member of the Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Military Support Foundation, I believe strongly in the need to support our troops, their mission, and their families. Volunteer work is a very important part of who I am.

During the pandemic, my volunteer work has taken on an added dimension as so many veterans in our area are in need of assistance with basic needs.

For the past year, I have devoted a substantial number of hours volunteering for the Food4Vets Program. Through the work of dozens of volunteers, this program has distributed millions of meals to needy veterans and their families throughout southeast Massachusetts.

We also expanded our work to provide food for children attending school in Sandwich and surrounding towns, and to provide winter clothing to needy veterans.

Recently, the Food4Vets program branched out even further.



Responding to a plea for assistance from a local Marine, the Food4Vets Program sent two tractor trailer loads of food and supplies to people in Texas suffering from damage caused to their homes by recent ice storms. We are always available to help those in need.

I also continue to volunteer for Big Nick's Ride for the Fallen, the charity started in memory of my son, Nick. During the pandemic, Big Nick's Ride was responsible for donating personal protective equipment (PPE) to health care workers on Cape Cod. We also continue to sponsor blood drives in coordination with Cape Cod Hospital.



## LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

**A**s a State Representative, I have a number of priorities that serve as the focus of my work and reflect my core beliefs as an elected official and an individual.

- As a former Deputy Police Chief, I have made a career out of working to improve public safety. Above all, to me that means being tough on crime, making sure our laws reflect law enforcement needs, and supporting first responders.
- Likewise, as a Gold Star Father, I am deeply committed on a personal level to supporting our troops, our veterans, and their families.
- I believe strongly in promoting a government that is limited in the exercise of its powers, and open and accountable to those it serves.
- I also believe in protecting Massachusetts taxpayers. It is important for all members of the Legislature to act as responsible stewards of public funds. We must do all we can to promote fiscal responsibility and efficiency while eliminating waste, fraud and abuse in state government.
- As Massachusetts continues to deal with the pandemic, it is important for our state to continue to appropriately address public health needs while also restoring our economy and reopening our businesses and schools as soon and as fully as possible. I am particularly supportive of our small business community.
- We must do all we can to support students and teachers in our public schools and to advocate for seniors.
- It is also important for us to protect the fragile environment here on Cape Cod.
- Above all else, my most important job as a State Representative is to support the communities and citizens I serve. I support Local Aid and will work hard on constituent service.

With this in mind, I have filed a series of bills so far this session:

### **Pandemic Relief**

#### ***HD.1965 - An Act Providing Financial Relief to Small Businesses During the COVID-19 Pandemic***

Under the 2020 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Congress directed the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to guarantee billions of dollars worth of targeted loans to small businesses nationwide. The purpose of the so-called Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) was to ensure that those small businesses – which collectively serve as major employers of American workers – would continue to pay their employees during the pandemic notwithstanding business interruptions and temporary closures.

If certain criteria are met, businesses are able to have some or all of their PPP loans forgiven by the SBA, meaning that they do not need to repay the money. However, in that case, the loan proceeds could be seen as business income under state tax law, meaning that the businesses would have to pay state income tax on amounts they received.

This legislation prevents this unfair result by creating a state tax deduction for income businesses received as a result of PPP loans which were forgiven by the SBA.

#### ***HD.1850 – An Act Relative to Filing Fees for Limited Liability Companies During the State of Emergency Due to COVID-19***

This legislation would reduce the fee to file a certificate of organization or an annual report

for an LLC, which is currently \$500, by 50% to \$250 during the current state of emergency. This fee reduction will be repealed 60 days after the termination of the state of emergency declared by the governor on March 10, 2020.

#### ***HD.2108 - An Act Relative to Department of Transitional Assistance Benefits***

This legislation would prohibit Department of Transitional Assistance benefits from being reduced during a state of emergency that lasts longer than 30 days as a result of Unemployment Insurance benefits increasing. This legislation would take effect 30 days following a declaration of emergency from the Governor and would end 30 days after the state of emergency is lifted.

### **Law Enforcement**

#### ***HD.326 – An Act Providing for the Care and Transportation of Police Dogs Injured in the Line of Duty (Nero’s Law)***

Nero’s Bill is in response to the 2018 murder of Yarmouth Police Sgt. Sean Gannon and the serious injury of his K9 partner, Nero. Current state law prohibits EMS personnel from tending to a K9 injured in the line of duty. This legislation would allow EMS to transport and treat K9s injured in the line of duty and would require a full cleaning of the ambulance following the transportation of the animal.

This legislation would allow emergency personnel to treat injured operational working animals, allow emergency personnel to transport injured operational working animals, and require any emergency personnel that

would render care to an operational working animal to have completed training consistent with standards approved by the Office of Emergency Medical Services.

**HD.374 – An Act to Improve Child Safety (Jointly Filed with Rep. Timothy Whelan)**

This legislation will allow law enforcement to communicate with DCF in cases pertaining to child abuse in domestic violence situations.

As it stands now, police departments across the Commonwealth are not allowed to report information they have gathered pertaining to child abuse in domestic violence situations up the chain to the Department of Children and Families (DCF). It goes without saying that this sort of information is critical to welfare of children impacted by abuse. Currently, there is a glitch in the system with regard to reporting child abuse during incidents of domestic violence; an unintended consequence of a law on the books in Section 97 D of Chapter 41 of the General Laws of 2016.

**HD.1884 - An Act relative to civilian mental health advocates**

This legislation would permit mental health civilian advocates to accompany law enforcement on mental health related calls. This follows the lead of other cities across the country starting similar initiatives. A large majority of calls made are related to mental and behavioral health needs, and an accompanying advocate would benefit both the caller and the first responder, so that long term help and progress can be made. Municipalities would be given the option to take part in the initiative.

**HD.327 – Resolve Relative to Police Career Pay Incentives**

The Quinn Bill was passed by the legislature in 1970 and established salary increases for police officers that corresponded with their educational attainment. Originally, both the state and municipality split the cost of the salary increase, with the municipality required to pay between 10-25 percent of the salary increase. In 2009, the state drastically cut their funding of the salary increases and in 2010, they eliminated their funding completely. Roughly, 250 municipalities opted in to the Quinn Bill and are now left footing the bill since the state has dropped their share of the funding. This legislation would establish a special commission to study the Quinn Bill in its current form to determine what our next steps should be in improving this program. Our nation is currently facing a police recruitment crisis. While the population is growing, the number of police officers is dropping dramatically. Since 2013, there has been a decrease of 23,000 officers. I believe this legislation would allow us to review the successes and shortcomings of the Quinn Bill, so that we, as a legislature, can work together to solve this law enforcement recruitment crisis.

This legislation would establish a special commission to study police career pay incentives which would review the current state of police career pay incentives pursuant to Section 108L of Chapter 41 of the MGL, determine the current amount of municipal police departments participating in the police career pay incentives program, review how each participating municipality is implementing the program, determine how

participating municipalities responded to the change in state funding, and determine potential improvements and or changes to the police career pay incentives program.

### ***HD.2114 – An Act Relative to Crowdfunding for Law Enforcement Officers (Lennon’s Law)***

Lennon’s Law would allow for first responders injured in the line of duty to receive donations through crowdsourcing fundraisers such as GoFundMe. This bill is named after State Trooper John Lennon who was shot in the line of duty during a traffic stop in Hyannis and seriously injured in November 2020. Limited and legitimate fundraising efforts for those injured in the line of duty should be recognized to support the first responder and their family.

### ***HD.3433 - An Act Relative to First Offense of Juveniles***

Juvenile Justice Reform mandated that crimes committed by juveniles carrying a sentence of 6 months or less or a fine be dismissed as a first offense. Since then the SJC has ruled that a first offense for that category of crimes must be dismissed forthwith, as legislated. To charge a juvenile with a 6 month misdemeanor crime as a second offense a hearing must be held where the prosecutor must first prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the juvenile committed the first offense before they can move on to prosecute the second offense, at which point the juvenile would be eligible for a diversion program.

This means that if the juvenile committed the first offense on Cape Cod and then went home to Sturbridge and committed a second offense

before he or she turned 18 the charging officer from the Cape would have to travel to Western Massachusetts with all of his or her their evidence from the original incident (if it was preserved after the case was dismissed as mandated) to participate in the first offense hearing. After all of that the juvenile, who has now engaged in a pattern of criminal behavior, becomes eligible for a diversion program (after a subsequent offense has already been committed).

This problem has required a legislative fix since the law was passed. No one could have intended that a repeat juvenile offender be treated as a first time offender after more than one offense. Nor did anyone predict the SJC’s solution (in the absence of a proper legislative fix) as having to prove the first offense after it has been dismissed. Creating a statutory definition of first offense removes at the finding of probable cause and triggering the diversion option at that time relieves the logistical burden of the first offense hearing and allows for what was intended, an opportunity for a juvenile offender to participate in the diversion program at the time of the first offense, not the second or subsequent incident.

The error has hampered juvenile law enforcement since it was passed and that sends the wrong message to everyone.

### **General Welfare and Public Safety**

### ***HD.348 – An Act Relative to Right of Way Violations (Cecelia’s Law)***

This legislation would increase the penalty for right of way violations from a minimum of \$35 to a minimum of \$200. This important

Public Safety Bill is currently in its 12th year since being initially filed and is a no cost to the Commonwealth initiative. Please note that this is not simply a motorcycle safety bill but in fact addresses all road users such as, and including, pedestrians, bicycle riders, horseback riders, motorcycle riders, and automobile operators.

Cecelia's Law is named in memory of Cecelia Finnegan, age 26, of Bourne, who was killed in a crash caused by a driver of a vehicle who failed to grant her the right of way and collided with her as she was driving her motorcycle to work in September 2020. Failure to grant the right of way is a major factor in the death or serious injury of many motorcycle operators.

***HD.375 – An Act Relative to Safe Dog Ownership (Jointly Filed with Rep. Timothy Whelan)***

Named after “Doc”, a small dog attacked and killed by a larger, aggressive dog that was kept unleashed. Doc's owner was also attacked, suffering serious injury. This bill will assess a \$2,500 fine to owners who irresponsibly restrain/control aggressive dogs and will additionally assign prima facie evidence of liability in any succeeding civil proceedings.

**Disabilities**

***HD.376 – An Act Creating a Low Vision Registry***

The legislation creates a database for MA residents who are ‘Low Vision’ as opposed to legally blind. In MA, there are no services for those who are not LEGALLY blind (vision of 20/200, as opposed to 20/20, in the better

of your two eyes after surgery or other correction). If your vision is 20/189, you cannot see and need help, the Commonwealth by statute cannot provide it to you (save for a few programs using only Federal money, such as some at MassRehab). This legislation would create a database where a doctor or medical professional could submit the name of a patient with 20/70 low vision on the same basis as blindness. The state would then notify these people of the difference, and then refer them to places that do provide low vision services as well as blindness services such as the Perkins Library, Sight Loss Services, MA Association for the Blind, etc., who can then provide information on resources, devices, programs, etc.

**Permitting**

***HD.1567 - An Act Relative to Electrical Wiring and Permitting***

This legislation would allow for online electrical permits. The law currently states that written notices are needed for approval of work or permits, however the law should be updated to reflect the times and advancement of technology to allow for online permitting.

**Child Welfare & Families**

***HD.2120 – An Act Relative to Department of Transitional Assistance Benefits for Diapers***

This legislation would allow EBT benefits to be used for purchasing diapers. Currently, the funds are only allowed to be used for food. This legislation would not increase the benefit rate, but would allow the beneficiaries to use

their funds to purchase diapers if they choose to do so. Just as food is vital for health and security, diapers are a necessity.

**HD.1566 – An Act Relative to Penalties for Unlawful Passing of a School Bus**

This legislation would increase monetary penalties for failing to stop or illegally passing a stopped school bus. The current law has the fine at a minimum of \$250 for the first offense, \$500 for the second and up to \$2,000 and a suspended license of up to a year for subsequent offenses. This legislation would increase the monetary penalty by \$100 for each offense.

**Opioid Epidemic**

**HD.2192 – An Act Relative to Fentanyl Arrests**

Fentanyl was found in 93% of all opioid-related deaths in 2019 and 2020 in Massachusetts, in cases where toxicology tests had been conducted. This legislation would establish no bail for anyone arrested for distribution or intent to distribute fentanyl. The synthetic opioid is driving the increase in overdose deaths according to the Centers for Disease Control and are made to look like other prescription drugs. Much of the fentanyl in Massachusetts is illicitly produced, according to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

**HD.1979 – An Act Making August 31st Overdose Awareness Day in the Commonwealth**

This legislation would establish August 31st of every year as Overdose Awareness Day.

**Veterans**

**HD.1551 – An Act Expanding Creditable Service Benefits to Veterans Who Have Served in the Armed Forces of the United States**

Amends GL 32:4 regarding public employee creditable service towards retirement benefits; entitles veterans to up to five years of creditable service for time in the armed forces of the United States; conditions the creditable service upon a subsequent permanent appointment as a permanent member of a fire or police department.

**HD.2322 – An Act Relative to Creditable Service Buy-Back for Veterans**

This legislation would reduce the retirement rate to buyback military service time for veterans who are buying back time as police and fire fighters.

**HD.2599 – An Act Relative to the Air Medal License Plate**

This legislation would expand the existing law directing the MA RMV to issue Veterans plates free of charge for recipients of combat awards within the “Pyramid of Honor”. Of the awards within the Pyramid of Honor, only the Air Medal was excluded. The Air Medal is awarded to members of the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and Coast Guard for valorous or meritorious action in aerial flight. The Bronze Star was actually modeled after the Air Medal, and like the Bronze Star, it can only be awarded for combat operations.



## ABOUT STEVE XIARHOS

Steve Xiarhos (R - 5th Barnstable District) was elected to serve as State Representative on November 3, 2020 and was sworn into office on January 6, 2021.

Steve is the grandson of Greek legal immigrants and a lifelong American Patriot. He is the son and grandson of United States Army, Air Force, and Merchant Marine Veterans. He has a strong desire to serve our Country and assist and support the men and women of our American Armed Forces, First Responders, and Veterans and Military families of all wars and conflicts especially post 9-11. Currently, he serves on the Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Iraq and Afghanistan Fallen Heroes Memorial Fund and the Massachusetts Military Support Foundation; as well as a Volunteer for Wounded Warrior Project Cape Cod Soldier Ride. He is a graduate of Anna Maria College, Northeastern University, and Cape Cod Community College (where he majored in Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement).

Steve was born and raised in New Bedford, Massachusetts. In the summer of 1979, he found work as a seasonal Summer Reserve Police Officer, patrolling the town's beaches during tourist season. One day, he received a call from the town, saying that he was being hired to be a full-time Patrol Officer. He accepted, beginning a 40-year career with the Yarmouth Police Department. During those four decades of service, Steve was promoted to the ranks of Detective, School Resource Officer, Patrol Sergeant, Lieutenant, Patrol Force Commander, Detective Division Commander, and eventually Deputy Chief of Police. He retired from the police department on December 8, 2019.

Throughout his career, Steve attended numerous specialized training courses and is a graduate of the Babson College Command Training Course and the FBI Law Enforcement Executive Development Seminar. He is the recipient of 22 various police department

awards and decorations including Officer of the Year, Yarmouth Area Chamber of Commerce Person of the Year, Rotary Club of Yarmouth Vocational Service Award, Mothers Against Drunk Driving Officer of the Year, and the Barnstable County Human Rights Commission Rosenthal Award.

Currently, Steve lives in Barnstable with his fiancée, Denise L. Kalbach. Denise was born and raised in Harwich and is a Nurse Practitioner working for Cape Cod Healthcare. She has earned a Bachelors Degree from Salve Regina and Masters Degrees from UMASS Dartmouth and UMASS Boston.

Steve is a proud parent of four children. He is a Gold Star Father, in honor of his oldest son, Nicholas. Nick Xiarhos died at age 21 on the battlefield during Operation Enduring Freedom. He was going to the rescue of fellow Marines in combat as part of 'Operation Strike of the Sword' in the Garmsir district of Helmand Province Afghanistan on July 23, 2009. Steve's other son, Alexander, served alongside Steve as a full-time Police Officer in the town of Yarmouth. Steve's identical twin daughters, Elizabeth and Ashlyne, serve in the hospitality industry.

Aside from his work with the Yarmouth Police Department, Steve has successfully initiated and coordinated many community fundraising and awareness events including the YPD BLUE 5K Run for a Reason, First Responder Appreciation Freedom Ride, and Big Nick's Ride for the Fallen. He also participated in and completed numerous road races including the Marine Corps and Boston Marathons as well as the Marine Corps Honor Run, the



Falmouth Road Race, Boston Firefighters 10K, the Boston Run to Remember, and the Marine Corps Marathon 10K.

### **The 5th Barnstable District**

The 5th Barnstable District consists of:

- Barnstable (Precincts 11 and 12 only)
- Bourne (Precincts 1, 2, and 7 only)
- Plymouth (Precinct 9 only)
- Sandwich

### **Disclaimer**

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