

Chris Soto

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Education

MPA, Brown University, *Taubman Center for American Politics and Policy*, Master of Public Affairs 2010-2011
B.S., U.S. Coast Guard Academy, Operations Research and Computer Analysis 1999-2003

Experience

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION; State of Connecticut Hartford, CT
Director of Innovation and Partnerships 12/2019-Present

- Key member of Department's Senior Leadership Team serving as Commissioner's primary liaison with external stakeholders including: governmental agencies, institutions of higher education, school districts, philanthropy, students, and families
- Responsible for helping create Connecticut's Reopening Plan during COVID-19 for state's 530,000 students. Directly coordinated the drafting, promulgation, and strategic outreach of plan statewide
- Chair of AccelerateCT Task Force – Education Department's statewide framework for Learning Recovery, Acceleration and Post-Pandemic Education. Task Force is comprised of over 100 statewide stakeholders whose expertise are contributing to a bold redesigned educational response to learning that promotes renewal, reducing opportunity gaps, accelerating learning and advancing equity during and after the COVID-19 pandemic
- Spearheaded agency's new vision for College & Career Readiness (CCR), chairing state's CCR Alliance and liaising directly with the Governor's Workforce Council to set a bold agenda to increase post-secondary opportunities for K-12 students statewide
- Strategized, led, and implemented a variety of statewide initiatives including, but not to: Statewide FAFSA Completion Challenge, LEGO Philanthropic Donations to under-resourced school districts, and ARP ESSER Summer Enrichment Grant Program

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR; State of Connecticut Hartford, CT
Director of Legislative Affairs 1/2019-12/2019

- Responsible for the development and implementation of strategies to advance the Governor's legislative agenda
- Serve as principal liaison between the Governor's office and the State legislature, along with other key stakeholders and advocacy groups, collaborating on policy, legislation, and statutory language
- On behalf of executive branch, helped negotiate the successful passage of key legislative priorities including: Increasing Connecticut's minimum wage, Paid Family & Medical Leave, Bolstering Minority Teacher Recruitment, and expanding 5G technology throughout the state
- Managed and led the legislative team to advance the administration's position and articulate stance on proposed legislation, team consisted of three legislative associates and 25 agency liaisons

CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY; Elected representative of 24,000 constituents at the State Capitol New London, CT
State Representative 1/2017-1/2019

Committees: Appropriations (Vice-Chair), Housing, Higher Education & Employment Advancement

- As Vice-Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, worked in a bi-partisan manner to help draft and ensure passage of the state's \$19-billion spending plan
- Helped write and champion legislation to strengthen magnet schools in Connecticut; a public-school choice framework that works to reduce racial isolation and segregation, giving low-income families improved educational opportunities
- Helped secure over \$20 million in state funding for capital improvements to New London's port for commercial operations
- As a member of the legislature's Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force, helped craft and champion legislation to eliminate barriers to certification for prospective teachers of color
- Managed and supervised staff of three which helped achieve legislative goals and effectively serve constituents

EDUCATION CONSULTANT New London, CT
Principal 7/2018-12/2018

- *Client: Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut* – Researched effective Cradle 2 Career (c2c) models and presented options to consider for implementation in New London, Connecticut
- *Client: Connecticut College* – Conducted feasibility study of revenue generating options within the College's Education Department

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE; Selective liberal arts college New London, CT
Adjunct Faculty Professor 7/2014-6/2016

- Taught Junior seminar in public policy for four semesters in Connecticut College's Holleran Center for Community Action

- HIGHER EDGE;** Connecticut's first college-completion organization for low-income students New London, CT
Executive Director, Chief Executive Officer 8/2011-6/2018
- Founded and directed Connecticut's first college-completion organization for low-income students, serving over 300 students at the high school and college level in two Eastern Connecticut Cities: New London and Willimantic
 - Created a curriculum model and framework to improve the college enrollment and graduation rates for the region's college-bound students, resulting in a 39% increase in 4-year college enrollment and a 108% increase in 4-year private school enrollment in the region over a 7-year period
 - Designed and executed org's \$350,000 fundraising plan, while developing new opportunities for strategic partnerships with regional stakeholders throughout Connecticut including state officials, university presidents, and local boards of education
 - Supervised staff of seven including program director, development associate, and front-line college advisors
- U.S. COAST GUARD ACADEMY;** Nationally recognized federal service academy New London, CT
Assistant Director of Diversity, GS-11 6/2009-7/2010
- Served as principal advisor to the Chief Diversity Officer. Encouraged the development and implementation of innovative diversity initiatives and training methods delivered across campus to over 1,000 students, faculty, and staff
 - Led the execution of the Superintendent's STEM initiatives through inner-city pipeline partnerships in NYC and Puerto Rico
 - Provided strategic guidance and leadership on the implementation of diversity and inclusive learning best practices within the Corps of Cadets summer internship experience
 - Initiatives resulted in direct impact on recruitment and retention of underrepresented students, meeting critical Academy and Coast Guard mission needs
- HYM ENTERTAINMENT COMPANY;** Latin dance, entertainment, and management company Lawrence, MA
Business Manager 6/2008-6/2009
- Managed one full-time world renowned dance company (How You Move / Hacha y Machete) executing all contract negotiations, itineraries, and business items
 - Managed full-time staff of three and part-time staff of four. Responsible for studio management, work schedules, marketing, promotion initiatives, and overall business strategy
 - Managed two full-time latin-jazz bands executing all contract negotiations and itineraries. Responsible for their entire marketing strategy and promotion. Responsible for distribution of produced CDs to nationwide wholesalers and retailers. Responsible for the creation of all marketing and promotional material. Worked closely with Public Relations representatives for maximum exposure and coverage of artists
 - Produced acclaimed Latin-Jazz CD titled "HOT BREAD" for renowned pianist Gilberto 'Pulpo' Colón Jr. Sold over 6,000 units in less than 9 months as independent label. CD selected as Independent Music Awards Finalist for best Latin Song (2008)
 - Oversaw the implementation of dance enrichment programming called "Learn Through Dance," in Boston Public Schools
- U.S. COAST GUARD;** Premier Maritime, Military, and Humanitarian Service New York & Miami
Team Leader, Maritime Force Protection Unit, New York 6/2005-5/2008
- Supervised and led 13-member anti-terrorism team in support of port safety and security missions
 - Highlight from Supervisor review: "Lieutenant Soto developed a stellar reputation as an expert in anti-terrorism by successfully partnering with the maritime industry and FBI field offices in both New York City and Newark, NJ. Demonstrating exceptional planning and mission execution, LT Soto led the unit through 26,000 miles of convoys, 8,058 underway boat hours, 14 training exercises, and over 200 security boardings during prominent Homeland Security Events and Presidential Security Operations throughout the United States, including the highly visible United Nations General Assembly. Displaying exceptional professional expertise and competence, LT Soto was selected to be Lead Evaluator for the 2007 Deployable Specialized Forces Personnel Assessment and Selection to evaluate tactical law enforcement candidates throughout the Coast Guard." – LCDR Jeffrey Janzen, 2008
- Assistant Engineer Officer, USCGC VALIANT (210' Law Enforcement Vessel), Miami* 6/2003-5/2005
- Responsible for the administration & operation of 30-person Engineering Department
 - Successful tour resulted in rating as 'distinguished officer' being placed in the top 5% of entire Coast Guard officer peer group
 - Coordinated & managed two-month ship construction overhaul. Despite 60% growth outlook, ship was delivered on time due to aggressive supervision of all work items allowing unit to meet all operational commitments. Efforts saved unit and Coast Guard over \$100,000 dollars
 - As a result of intensive and innovative damage control training leadership, became a key figure in ship's success during two Cutter Training Periods earning the Atlantic Coast's Operational Readiness Award for two consecutive years

- Created innovative program which tracked ship fuel consumption and projected usage. Model was used by sister ships
- Interacted with multinational senior military officials Spanish Speaking representative for unit

Activities & Awards

Tackling Community College Transfer Advisory Board (<i>HCM Strategists, SOVA, Aspen Institute</i>), Member	2020-2021
State of Connecticut Latino & Puerto Rican Affairs Commission, <i>Legislatively Appointed - Commissioner</i>	2015-2017
U.S. Coast Guard Academy Alumni Association, <i>Vice-Chairman, Board of Directors</i>	2012-2015
Brown University Graduate School, <i>Bernard E. Bruce Inspirational Leadership Award</i>	2011
Eastern Connecticut Chamber of Commerce, <i>40 Under 40</i>	2013
Coast Guard Achievement Medal (x2)	2005,2008

Publications

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- **["It's time to fix the broken higher education transfer pipeline"](#), *The Hill*, 2020**
 - **["U.S. Coast Guard Academy blindingly white"](#), *Baltimore Sun*, 2017**

Key Philanthropic & Social Impact Highlights

Experienced government and non-profit leader with a 18-year demonstrated track record of organizational leadership.

- As Vice-Chairman of the Coast Guard Academy Alumni Association, helped shape and launch \$30 Million-Dollar Capital Campaign which met goal
- Identified community need and met challenge head on by envisioning, implementing, and leading successful community-based organization. Geographically scaled to second city in under five years, now serving Eastern Connecticut