It’s my pleasure and honor to serve our community in the Indiana Senate. I believe that past behavior is the best indication of future performance. That’s why I’ve included a detailed account of the issues facing our community and the work I’ve done to address those issues in the Senate. Note: Senate Bills and House Bills are abbreviated as SB or HB, when a bill is signed into law it becomes an Enrolled Act, abbreviated as SEA or HEA.

**Education**

* I strongly believe that education is one of the most important topics the State Legislature works on and influences. As Ranking Minority Member of the Senate Education and Career Development Committee, my top priority is ensuring that all of our students have the opportunities and resources to succeed in school, find areas they’re interested in and passionate about, and are in a strong position to succeed after high school. My position on the Committee puts me in a strong position to advocate for the needs our of schools and students. During my first term in the Senate I’ve:
  + Supported the 2021-22 [State budget](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2021/bills/house/1001) that made a significant investment in education funding, including supporting teacher pay raises. Given Indiana’s nearly $6 billion surplus, I am committed to ensuring we make sustained investments in our students and schools in the next budget as well.
  + Played a part in the defeat of Senate Bill [SB 167](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2022/bills/senate/167) and House Bill [HB 1134](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2022/bills/house/1134) thanks to bipartisan opposition this session. This legislation would have burdened teachers, censured classrooms, and failed to address the biggest issues impacting our students. Parental engagement is always important, but my Republican and Democratic colleagues agreed that this legislation would not benefit our kids. I want to ensure that our schools are teaching all of our history. While we wasted time on this legislation, we failed to take up crucial issues for our schools like addressing student mental health concerns and ensuring our kids are learning the skills to succeed after graduation.
  + Because of these efforts, I was honored to be named a “Friend to Education” by the Indiana State Teachers Association. Additionally, the Indiana School Social Worker Association chose me as their Legislator of the Year. I was honored that they recognized my work. Lastly, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) has also endorsed our 2022 re-elect campaign.
  + Introduced legislation to ensure that growing communities like Carmel and Zionsville receive full funding for every new student. [SB 368](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2022/bills/senate/368) would update the school funding formula to account for these population changes to ensure a live, real-time update. As the General Assembly studies the needed changes to the funding formula this summer, I will be advocating to include this common-sense idea.
  + I’ve listened to teachers, school staff, and administrators to address the biggest issues facing our teachers. That’s why I introduced [SB 315](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2022/bills/senate/315) with two of my Republican colleagues to study and address class sizes, caseloads for social workers, guidance counselor to student ratios, and how to address school staffing.
  + We have also seen a concerted effort by groups like the Purple for Parents for Indiana (and other spin off groups like Moms for Liberty) attack social and emotional learning. Social and emotional learning sets up our students for success and I will fight to protect it. Additionally, we have also seen these groups attack diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. DEI is paramount to our students because it teaches them, among other things, how to work with people that may look, speak, pray, etc. differently than themselves.
  + Speaking of supporting students, I’ve authored and co-authored bipartisan legislation to expand and improve mental health services for our students. They have been dealing with the typical stresses of school and a pandemic at the same time and I think it’s important for us to provide them with all the mental health resources we can.
  + In 2021, I Co-sponsored House Enrolled Act [HEA 1384](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2021/bills/house/1384) to create a new civics course for all Indiana students starting in 6th grade. Civics education is critical to teaching students about government and instilling in them an interest in being well-informed citizens that are engaged in community and government at all levels. This is how we maintain our government of the people, by the people. I am also honored to serve on the Civics Education Commission with Lt. Governor Crouch and education stakeholders to set the curriculum for this new civics course.
  + I’ve supported and introduced legislation to expand Pre-K to more Hoosier families. I’ve supported the On My Way Pre-K program and advocated making it available to more Hoosier families with legislation like [SB 236](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2019/bills/senate/346) that I introduced in 2019. Research shows us that Pre-K is critical for a child’s development and success in school down the road.
  + As we head into the 2022-2023 school year, we have over 2000 school openings for schools. So many folks have left the teaching profession and so many more plan to do so. We, as the General Assembly, must start showing respect for our teachers. We can start by removing the General Assembly from micromanaging the classroom and showing them that we care. To do my part, I have created a Teacher-of-the-Month award where I print a certificate and bring a morning treat to do a presentation to the teacher and to the students. This small but mighty act is my small way of showing appreciation.
  + Unfortunately, we’ve seen more school shootings in recent years, including right here in Central Indiana in 2018. In addition to advocating for gun safety and background checks, I’ve also supported legislation to provide school resource officers in our schools to provide extra security. This includes [HEA 1151](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2020/bills/house/1151) from the 2020 session that I co-sponsored to expand benefits for these officers and make it easier for school districts to retain them. I think it’s crucial that we remember the role that mental health plays in these situations and continue to expand social and emotional learning to help our students grow into well-rounded and healthy adults.
  + On the collegiate side of education issues, we have seen a significant decrease in male students not wanting to go to college. This deserves our attention and we should try and get to the root of this issue.

**Economy**

* Our district is a big part of Indiana’s economic hub, Indianapolis, Carmel and Zionsville are home to businesses of all sizes that help drive our state’s economy. I strongly believe that our economic success is directly tied to our educational success and the successes of Hoosier workers. I’m not alone in these thoughts, Eli Lilly CEO David Ricks recently shared his concerns about Indiana’s lack of investment in education and Governor Eric Holcomb has recently commented that increases in education funding are a top priority of his. To help boost our local economy I’ve supported and worked on the following legislation:
  + Our district is fortunate to border significant sports complexes including the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and Grand Park in Westfield, not to mention downtown Indianapolis. I was proud to co-authored [SEA 245](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2022/bills/senate/245) this session to help boost local efforts to bring sports and tourism events to Indiana. More folks coming to Central Indiana for sporting events will be a boost to all businesses and help support more good-paying jobs.
  + During the COVID 19 pandemic, small businesses were hit especially hard. That’s why I sponsored [HEA 1004](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2021/bills/house/1004) which funded the Small Business Restart Grant. This legislation provided much needed support to keep small businesses going and protect jobs across Central Indiana. I also ensured that my office was there to help businesses of all sizes navigate state programs and funding during the pandemic to ensure they received all the support they were eligible for.
  + During the 2021 budget session, I supported funding for Indiana’s Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative (READI) grants. This led to a $20 million grant for the Central Indiana region for projects to improve quality of life, job training, business and technology centers, housing, and environmental improvements. I strongly believe that Indiana should invest in a second round of these grants in the 2023 budget to further the reach of these local public-private partnerships.
  + During that same session, I Sponsored [HEA 1169](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2021/bills/house/1169) to help protect our businesses, government and schools from the growing threat of cyber attacks. The legislation created the first state agency to directly record cyber attacks and present annual reports to help us better address threats as they emerge. We know that these threats will continue to evolve and we must stay vigilant and flexible to address these challenges.
  + I am fortunate to serve as the Ranking Minority Member on the Senate’s Transportation Committee. I have worked hard to ensure that our district receives our fair share of infrastructure funding from the state budget and from federal programs. In fact, one of my priorities for the funding Indiana is receiving and will receive from the recent Federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is that communities will receive more funds directly, so that we can repair our local roads first before taking on expansive new projects.
  + During the 2022 session, I supported [HEA 1002](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2022/bills/house/1002). This bipartisan bill responsibly cuts taxes over the next several years without impacting local governments while also ensuring that our teacher pension fund is responsibly paid for. Under this bill, the tax cuts would pause if revenues decline to ensure Indiana’s budget isn’t impacted.
  + During the 2020 session, I Co-Authored [SEA 350](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2020/bills/senate/350) to boost economic development in Central Indiana. The legislation allows local governments and counties in Central Indiana to partner on economic development and infrastructure projects.
  + It’s no surprise to anyone in our district that electric vehicles are becoming more common in Central Indiana. That’s why I sponsored [HEA 1168](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2021/bills/house/1168) in 2021 to create an Electric Vehicle Product Commission. As a member of the Commission, I’ve worked to help Indiana become a leader in the EV industry. Thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Indiana is receiving $100 million for EV charging stations. I’m committed to ensuring that these stations are leveraged to benefit our district. Indiana has the opportunity to manufacture these vehicles and lead in battery innovation if we leverage our resources and ensure Hoosiers have the skills to fill these jobs.
  + I co-authored [SB 44](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2021/bills/senate/44) during the 2021 session. This was bipartisan legislation to create a work-sharing program that would help protect Hoosier jobs during economic downturns. The voluntary program would allow businesses to keep workers employed with fewer hours rather than laying folks off, the state would then supplement some of that income using unemployment funds. Given the changing nature of work across the country, I think it would be beneficial for folks to be able to stay in the workforce with this kind of setup during economic downturns.

**Environment**

* I strongly believe that we should all be good stewards of our environment. It’s important for us to maintain our natural resources, like Eagle Creek Park, for generations to come. That’s why I advocate for conservation, ensuring Indiana invests in clean energy technology and other policies that fight climate change. Unfortunately, Indiana ranks poorly for being a polluted stated. In a recent study, Indiana was found to be one of the worst states in the nation for polluted streams and waterways. So, we must ensure we elect people who believe in protecting clean air and clean water. My efforts in the Senate include:
  + During the 2021 legislative session, I opposed [legislation](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2021/bills/senate/389) to remove protections for our state’s wetlands. Wetlands not only filter out pollution and reduce carbon emissions but also limit flooding. I heard from folks across our district that they supported more conservation of our wetlands, not removing protections. Despite bipartisan opposition, this legislation was signed into law.
  + With the growth of renewable energy, including folks using solar panels on their homes, I have strongly supported Net Metering which allows individuals to lower their energy bills thanks to the excess energy from their solar panels. During the 2019 session, I authored a bipartisan bill ([SB 430](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2019/bills/senate/430)) that would have maintained net metering and encouraged the use of renewable energy while lowering energy bills.
  + I authored Senate Bill [(SB) 373](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2021/bills/senate/373%23) with my Senate Republican colleagues to create carbon markets for Hoosier farmers. This legislation would have made it easier for farmers in Indiana to know how and where to sell carbon offsets and would have provided an extra source of income for those doing their part to make Indiana a cleaner, more environmentally-friendly state. This legislation passed the Senate in 2021 and I will continue working to ensure it passes both chambers and is signed into law going forward.
  + During the 2020 session, I advocated against [HEA 1414](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2020/bills/house/1414%23document-33257379) (Coal Bailout bill) legislation that would prop up the coal industry with our tax dollars. Our goal should be to invest in cleaner and more affordable energy, not propping up industries that are more expensive and dirtier than the alternatives.

**Elections**

* As the Ranking Minority Member on the Senate Elections Committee, I am committed to ensuring we maintain our free and fair elections. I am also committed to ensuring that all registered voters can easily participate in our elections. I have also helped lead the fight against gerrymandering, or the partisan drawing of election districts to favor one politician or political party, in the Senate. I believe that election districts should be decided independently by Hoosiers who don’t serve in the General Assembly. Politicians shouldn’t get to pick out their voters. It’s also important that we recognize that Indiana’s elections are fair, accurate and legitimate. It’s incredibly irresponsible for folks like Secretary of State Candidate Diego Morales to deny the results of previous elections. It’s incredibly important that we elect people who will stand up to these election deniers. In the Senate, I’ve introduced legislation to make it easier to register to vote and easier to vote by:
  + Authoring [SB 349](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2019/bills/senate/349) during the 2019 legislative session. This bill would automatically register folks to vote when they receive or renew their driver’s license unless they opt-out of registering. This is the most straightforward way to ensure that all Hoosiers, and especially young folks, are registered to vote and can participate in our elections.
  + This year, I introduced [SB 71](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2022/bills/senate/71) to make it easier for Hoosiers over 65 and with disabilities to vote by mail. The bill would simply allow these folks to apply for permanent absentee status, rather than having to apply every election.

**Equality**

* I’m privileged to represent our diverse communities in District 29. I’m also proud to be the first openly serving LGBTQ+ member of the Indiana General Assembly and so far the only. Losing my seat would mean that our community would lose a seat at the table. If you ever visit my Capitol office, you will see the heartfelt notes from our LGBTQ+ youth from all over the state thanking me for being visible and thanking me for representing them. Visibility and representation matters. Through my own experiences, I know how important it is for folks to be treated with respect and dignity regardless of their background, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or any other traits. While we may not agree on every issue, I am grateful for the bipartisan support from Governor Holcomb on some of these issues including his veto of [HB 1041](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2022/bills/house/1041) and the passage of bipartisan criminal justice reform. Some of my work on equality issues include:
  + In the 2020 session, I authored [SB 250](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2020/bills/senate/250) to prohibit any school that receives taxpayer dollars from discriminating against staff based on disability, race, color, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, religion, or ancestry. I proudly stood with then Superindenent of Public Instruction Dr. Jennifer McCormick who also called for this legislation.
  + I also fought to pass a comprehensive bias crimes bill that would protect all Hoosiers from violence against who they are. Unfortunatly, the legislature ended up watering down the legislation to leave our ceratin groups and I voted against it because I know we can do better. This year, I authored [SB 63](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2022/bills/senate/63) to prohibit any school from discriminating based on seuxal orientation and gender identity.
  + Last year, I authored [SB 32](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2021/bills/senate/32) to ban conversion therapy. This legislation simply prohibits a mental health provider from engaging in conversion therapy with a patient less than 18 years of age and subjects a mental health provider who violates the prohibition to disciplinary action. All Hoosiers should be encouraged to be who they are. Thankfully, most of the mental health providers I have spoken to are against this horrible and dangerous practice.
  + This year, I joined Governor Holcomb in opposing [HB 1041](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2022/bills/house/1041) that received national attention. This legislation would have prohibited transgender girls from playing girls’ sports. However, supporters of the bill could only offer one example of this occurring in Indiana and that case was handled by the Indiana High School Athletic Association (IHSAA). In fact, the IHSAA has a system in place to deal with any case that may come up to ensure fairness in sports for all of our kids.
  + Equality also means ensuring that at-risk communities aren’t placed at risk to benefit industries like the payday loan industry. That’s why I’ve fought against the expansion of predatory loans like this in the Senate. We should be lifting up all folks, not forcing folks to take out loans that are designed to hurt them in the long run. Along those same lines, I fought against the telecom industry when they were putting 5G poles in folks’ front yards.
  + In the 2022 session, I co-sponsored HB 1073 which provides for protections of a buyer who purchases a converted motor vehicle for personal, noncommercial use, when the converted motor vehicle suffers from a nonconformity.
  + Following the killing of George Floyd and the public calls for police reform, I worked with my Republican colleagues and the Legislative Black Caucus to support and Sponsor [HEA 1006](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2021/bills/house/1006). This bipartisan law enhances de-escalation training for law enforcement at all stages of training, establishes a procedure to allow the Indiana law enforcement training board to decertify an officer who has committed misconduct, bans chokeholds in most circumstances, creates a misdemeanor offense for police officers that knowingly turn off their body camera, and ensures that all police departments have access to previous employment history at other departments to prevent bad officers from being rehired.

**Excellence in Healthcare**

* Improving access to quality, affordable healthcare that works for Hoosier families and businesses is one of the most important ongoing issues facing our state. Indiana fairs poorly in many important healthcare rankings compared to other states. We [rank](https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/rankings/health-care/public-health) in the bottom ten for public health, face the [7th highest](https://www.wfyi.org/news/articles/study-shows-indiana-has-seventh-highest-hospital-costs) hospital costs in the nation, have the [third-worst](https://www.wthr.com/article/news/investigations/13-investigates/indiana-has-one-worst-rates-childbirth-related-death/531-c9366a08-be9a-41fe-b8ce-18f1d8e37492) maternal mortality rate in the country and face a shortage of mental health providers among other shortcomings. My priorities for improving these rankings and previous efforts in the Senate include:
  + Supporting Governor Holcomb’s Public Health Commission and their recommendation to invest $250 million in our Public Health system to catch up with the national average. This investment is crucial for helping us deal with future pandemics, improve vaccination rates, and improve overall public health. You can find more about the Commission’s efforts [here](https://indianacapitalchronicle.com/2022/06/28/commission-says-250m-investment-needed-for-public-health/).
  + Lowering insulin costs. Prescription drug costs are a major contributor to our high healthcare costs. That’s why I’ve advocated for capping these costs, especially for life-saving medicine like insulin. My [amendment](https://iga.in.gov/legislative/2020/bills/house/1207) to cap insulin costs in 2020 was unfortunately rejected by the supermajority as was another amendment to have insurance plans cover life saving epipens.
  + Expanding Medicaid coverage for pregnant women. I sponsored the historic [HEA 1140](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2022/bills/house/1140) in the 2022 session to expand Medicaid coverage for pregnant women. This legislation is a big step toward reducing maternal mortality and keeping babies and mothers healthy. This bipartisan bill expands Medicaid to more pregnant women, allowing them to benefit from additional services. Mothers can stay on Medicaid for up to 12 months after giving birth under HEA 1140.
  + I also sponsored [HEA 1392](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2020/bills/house/1392%23digest-heading) in 2020 to expand the responsibilities of nurses and physician assistants to be able to sign death certificates.
  + I was proud to author SEA 169 in the 2021 session and work for its passage. SEA 169 required facilities who house with services to provide disclosures concerning Alzheimer’s and dementia special care and file the disclosure with the division of aging with the State of Indiana, who then will post the disclosures. This idea came from a constituent and I worked across the aisle to get it passed by both chambers and the Governor signed it into law. I hope this demonstrates that even in a supermajority, I have developed relationships to get things done for District 29 constituents.
  + Mental health days for students. The pandemic has exposed our shortage of mental health providers and access to mental health care, especially for our kids. That’s why I introduced SB 174 in the 2022 session to provide mental health days for our students to take when they need them. I’m also in support of policies to bring more mental health providers to Indiana and provide training for primary care physicians to provide mental healthcare services as well.
  + Protecting a woman’s right to choose and improving women’s healthcare. I voted against Senate Bill in the 2022 summer special session. I am outraged, like most Hoosiers, that this type of stripping of rights happened. I will continue to restore full bodily autonomy as long as I am your state senator! At the very core, I trust women to make this deeply personal decision and government doesn’t have any business being in exam rooms for folks’ healthcare decisions. Instead of banning abortion, we should focus our efforts on improving access to affordable healthcare, lowering our infant and maternal mortality rates and expanding access to childcare. Those are the kinds of pro-life and pro-family policies that will benefit Hoosiers.
  + Lowering healthcare costs for families and businesses. Indiana’s hospital costs are another major factor in not only the cost of care but high health insurance costs. We could significantly lower healthcare costs for Hoosier families and businesses by just bringing our hospital costs in line with the national average. I’m encouraged by the interest of my Republican colleagues in this area and will prioritize addressing this issue in the 2022 budget session. Because when I look at this issue, I’m looking at it through the lens of a consumer as I don’t have any ties to the healthcare industry. I simply want to see the costs go down. I think most Hoosiers would agree.

**Emergency Services/Public Safety**

* In the Senate, I’ve strongly advocated for policies that keep our communities safe. These policies include:
  + Voting against legislation to end Indiana’s permit system for publicly carrying firearms. The Indiana Association of Chiefs of Police, the state Fraternal Order of Police and State Police Superintendent Doug Carter all strongly opposed this legislation. As Superintendent Carter noted, the permit system has already flagged thousands of individuals who should not carry firearms due to previous felonies and documented mental health issues. I also co-authored [Senate Bill (SB) 228](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2022/bills/senate/228) which would have expanded background checks for firearms and created standards for the safe storage of firearms.
  + I supported [SB 7](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2022/bills/senate/7) and [SB 10](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2022/bills/senate/10) during this year’s session to help combat violent crime in Marion County and streamline collaboration between law enforcement departments, similar to the Gun Crimes Task Force I supported in 2021 to get illegal firearms off the streets. I also supported [SB 9](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2022/bills/senate/9) to improve electronic monitoring (ankle monitor) standards, including requirements to notify law enforcement in a timely fashion if an offender violates the conditions of the probation or parole.
  + In an effort to make our justice system fairer I co-authored [SB 117](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2022/bills/senate/117) which prohibits the disclosure of any information relating to a victim under the age of 18 without consent from the parent or guardian.
  + During the 2021 session, I sponsored [HB 1006](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2021/bills/house/1006), a historic bipartisan bill to improve police de-escalation training, set procedures for decertifying officers who commit misconduct, ban the use of chokeholds in most situations and create penalties when an officer intentionally turns off a body camera to conceal criminal activity.
  + To holistically address violent crime, I co-authored SB [344](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2022/bills/senate/344) to create a statewide task force for combating violent crime. This task force would bring together experts, law enforcement, members of the legal community and other citizens to create recommendations for the General Assembly. I’m disappointed this common-sense idea didn’t move forward and will continue to advocate for its passage next session.
  + To combat gun violence, I proudly sponsored legislation that created the Indiana Crime Guns Task Force with [HEA 1558](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2021/bills/house/1558). This legislation brought together law enforcement agencies from across Central Indiana to get illegal firearms possessed by criminals off the street, these officers have done a great job making progress over the last year and I continue to support their efforts to boost public safety.
  + Public safety also includes being able to safely drive, bike and walk in our communities. With increasing traffic crashes occurring across our state, including those striking cyclists and pedestrians, I authored [SB 173](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2022/bills/senate/173) to define vulnerable road users and catch Indiana up with other states who have criminal penalties for crashes that kill or seriously injure vulnerable road users that mirror penalties for crashes involving other vehicles. Additionally, I sponsored [HEA 1070](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2020/bills/house/1070) to combat distracted driving, specifically texting and driving. We need to ensure that all drivers, cyclists and pedestrians are getting home at the end of the day.
  + I also co-authored [SEA 247](http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2022/bills/senate/247) which seeks to improve how first responders from different jurisdictions respond to 911 calls just outside of their jurisdiction—think of places like 96th street between Zionsville and Indianapolis or Michigan Road between Carmel and Zionsville.
  + In the 2022 session, I co-sponsored HEA 1079, which changed an old and archaic definition of rape to one that defines consent. Having a law like HEA 1079 could mean that prosecutors could prosecute and this could mean more survivors may find justice.