




2023 ANNUAL REPORT
TO THE STATE



A WIDER SENSE OF

we



The Mission of The Connecticut Mirror is to produce original, in-depth, nonpartisan journalism that informs Connecticut residents about the impact of public policy, holds government accountable, and amplifies and engages diverse voices and perspectives.

Successfully advancing this mission will result in a stronger democracy in which all Connecticut residents can more effectively participate in the development of public policy and hold government accountable for understanding the needs of and fulfilling its promises to the people of Connecticut.

Dear Friend,

2023 was a year to catch our breath and digest the steep growth of our previous three years. We added a third editor as our larger staff produced more stories. We engaged an external consultant to help us navigate our increasingly complex technology needs. We paused on adding new journalism positions.

One area in which we didn't slow down was the pursuit of journalism that informed, investigated, and impacted Connecticut. You can read about that work on the pages that follow.

During this past year we took steps to **widen our lane**. We produced journalism that was more relevant to more communities and more people. We actively engaged and listened to communities that media have historically underserved. We expanded beyond our policy-focused journalism to include more “policy-adjacent” reporting. Our investigative team published a wider variety of accountability stories. We added important and well-received solutions stories to our journalism mix.

We introduced two new products, “Charting Connecticut” and “Crossing Connecticut.” Together with our evolving CT Mirror Explains stories they offer new approaches to storytelling that are reaching and informing new audiences.

If you already made a gift to CT Mirror this year we thank you. If you have not made a gift to CT Mirror this year, and even if you have, please consider that your financial support is critical to sustaining CT Mirror's journalism in 2024 and beyond. **Thank you.**



Bilal Sekou
Board Chair



Bruce Putterman
Publisher and CEO



Elizabeth Hamilton
Executive Editor

A wider sense of **WE**

At its core **widening our lane** means widening our definition of **we**. In the early years CT Mirror readers tended toward policy-makers and advocates. In recent years our audience has grown to include more people from more backgrounds in all parts of the state. In 2023, we broadened our definition of **we** even further, telling stories that are more relevant to more people and in more ways.



- **NEW JOURNALISM PRODUCTS** Expanded *CT Mirror Explains* to include more practical “news you can use” information, introduced *Crossing Connecticut*, featuring interesting people, places, and ideas, added *Charting Connecticut*, a weekly short story told through data, created a new housing newsletter called “Home State,” launching January 2024.
- **GREATER FOCUS ON COMMUNITY** Convened *community listening events* in six cities across the state, welcomed a second *Community Editorial Board* class, advanced plans to hire a community reporter, published a *three-part photo essay* featuring the 22 distinct Asian communities in CT.
- **MORE EVENTS** Re-started *in-person events* including a legislative preview and a one-on-one interview with

Gov. Lamont, reporters took on roles as event panelists, moderators, and interviewers, finalized plans for new monthly event series in 2024.

- **MORE PARTNERS** Collaborated with *Trinity College / Capital Community College Liberal Arts Action Lab* to conduct community research, several *CT hyperlocal news sites* plus *Google News Showcase* began publishing CT Mirror content.
- **ADVANCING LEADERSHIP** Took a leading role in *lobbying for limited public financing of local journalism*, offered 700,000 free advertising impressions to a dozen CT nonprofits, brought a community editorial board member onto CT Mirror governing board.
- **BUILDING CAPACITY** *Hired a third editor* to keep up with increased reporting, engaged our first technology consultant, expanded our office space, added in-house graphics capability!

“



As a data journalist, it’s rewarding for me to how to see how my data-driven stories build trust with our readers and empower their decision-making.”

– José Luis Martínez, *CT Mirror* journalist

Stories with *Impact*

As CT Mirror has grown our work has been increasingly ambitious, with a greater variety of stories, deeper dives into those stories, and more tangible impact. 2023 was no exception. Here are four examples of CT Mirror's high-impact journalism from this past year.

“I contribute to journalism by bringing people to the table to strengthen and sustain this critical work, because as a former reporter, I've seen firsthand the impact journalism has in our lives.

– **Clare Dignan**, *CT Mirror*
Director of Philanthropy



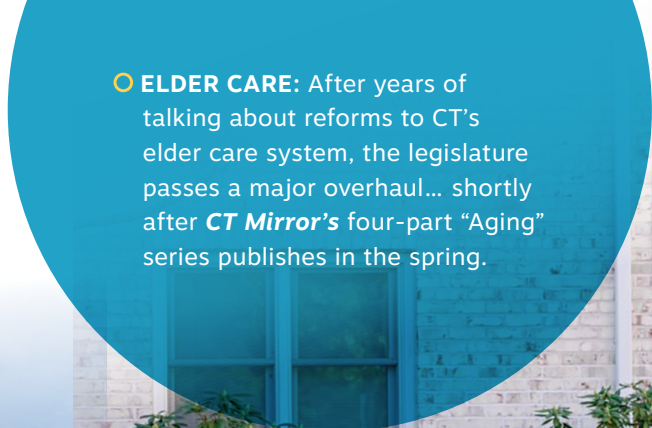
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○ **BABY BONDS:** \$600 million Baby Bonds compromise reached after *CT Mirror* reports the Governor quietly stonewalled the landmark legislation that he had signed with great fanfare.



○ **PORT AUTHORITY:** State Auditors rebuke Port Authority for allowing construction firm to manage the bidding process while simultaneously competing for the lucrative subcontracts.



○ **ELDER CARE:** After years of talking about reforms to CT’s elder care system, the legislature passes a major overhaul... shortly after *CT Mirror’s* four-part “Aging” series publishes in the spring.



○ **TEETERING HOSPITALS:** 30 legislators demand meeting with Prospect Medical hospitals after *CT Mirror* exposes concerns about debt and possible Yale New Haven Health retreat from buyout offer.



Update on our 2023 Goals

Goal: Provide the most comprehensive legislative coverage in our history. **In 2023 we deployed more reporters covering more proceedings than ever before.**

Goal: Hire a third editor to accommodate recent growth and bring new perspective to our newsroom. **In March we hired Keila Torres Ocasio as Enterprise Editor.**

Goal: Grow our business team to sustain recent growth and invest in new growth. **We continue our search for an Events/Sponsorship position, will add Audience/Marketing position in early 2024.**

Goal: Introduce new ways to engage current and new audiences with CT Mirror. **In 2023 we started community listening, explainers, data posts, new newsletters, news briefs.**

Amplifying Solutions

WORKFORCE HOUSING



Erica Phillips highlights a private sector housing solution providing low-cost housing to teachers at a New Haven Pre-K school.

TENANT UNIONS



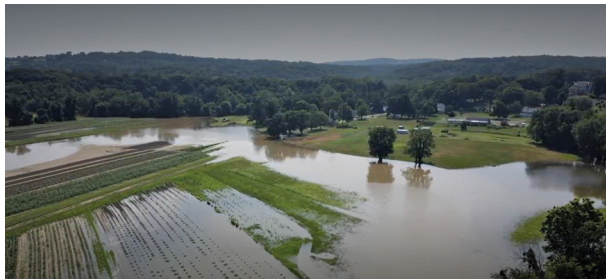
Ginny Monk covers the emergence of tenants unions to address rent increases, lease terms, apartment maintenance and communication standards.



CLIMATE ACTION



Jan Ellen Spiegel routinely includes solutions to climate change challenges, including stories on flooding, food waste, and even building emissions.



MUNICIPAL WORKFORCE PIPELINE



Tom Condon notes legislative, workforce development, and recruiting solutions in his highly popular story about shortages in high-skilled town jobs.

Our 2024 Goals

ACCOUNTABILITY

Deepen Current Beats,
Add New Beats

READERSHIP

Engage More Audiences,
More Deeply

FINANCIAL

Sustain Recent Growth,
Fund New Growth

OPERATIONS

Enhance Reader Experience,
Optimize Internal Systems

Welcome New Staff



Jessika Harkay, *Education Reporter*, covering community colleges, K-12 achievement gap, education funding, charter schools, curriculum, mental health, school safety, and inequity in education. Hired in January.



Keila Torres Ocasio, *Enterprise Editor*, editor for the G's and J's (Ginny, Gabby, Jaden, Jenna, Jessika), and bringing news operations and audience management experience to our newsroom. Hired in March.



Shahrzad Rasekh, *Visuals Journalist*, telling visual stories about life in Connecticut, with a focus on the impact of public policy on individuals and communities in our state. Summer fellow, hired on staff in September.



Irene Mackey, *Membership Manager*, growing and driving membership by cultivating relationships with current and prospective members using personalized communication. Hired in November.

“ We cannot have a vibrant democracy without an equally healthy press. I support the CT Mirror for the rigor of its newsgathering and because its non-profit status ensures that journalism, not profits, will always be its bottom line.” – Jen Just, *CT Mirror supporter*

Key indicators for 2023

In 2023, key subscriber, membership, revenue, and trust metrics were all up vs. 2022. Readership was sluggish throughout the industry in 2023, including at CT Mirror, but our 4th quarter readership has come roaring back.

\$2.4
MILLION
projected revenue

921
recurring donors

29
donors who made gifts
of \$5,000 or more

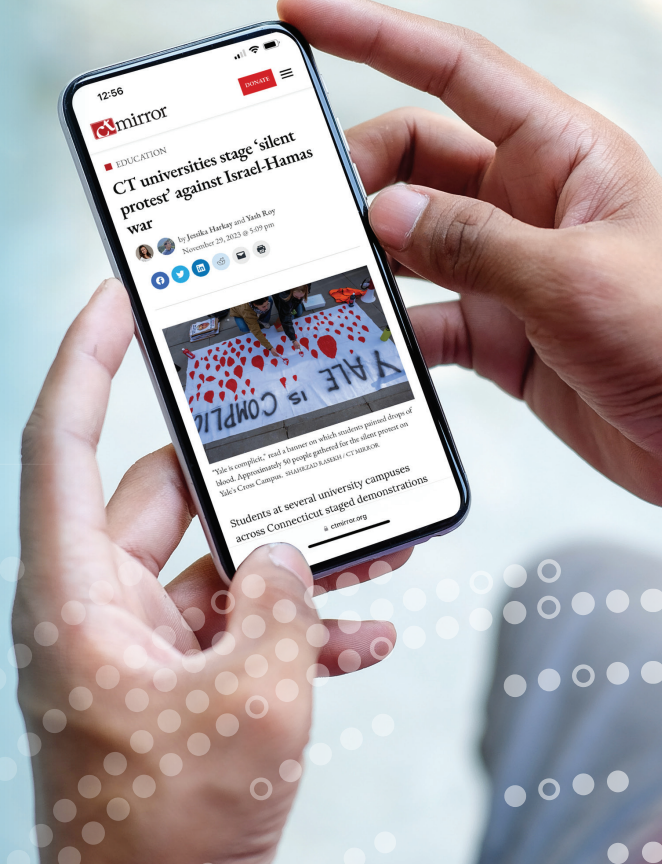
17
full-time
journalists

882
original news stories
published in the last
12 months

2,127
members

245,000
readers per month

17,600
newsletter subscribers





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“



Local journalism is vital to our democracy and community building. The Hartford Foundation is proud to support the Mirror as it connects residents to the challenges and opportunities that impact their daily lives.”

– Jay Williams, *President and CEO, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving*

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