



If you had one wish for 2021, what would it be?

COVID-19 by CT MIRROR STAFF DECEMBER 31, 2020

If everyone could cast one wish for what 2021 will bring, it's likely that nearly all of us would wish for COVID-19 to go away and never come back. Vaccines and vigilance might make that wish come true. But beyond that, what else would people like to see happen in 2021? The CT Mirror asked a variety of people — community leaders, elected officials, spokespeople and more — what they'd wish for in 2021 other than an end to the pandemic. Here are some of their responses.

Martha Stone, Executive Director, Center for Children's Advocacy: My greatest wish this year is to be able to look into the eyes of all the children we represent and assure them that our state leaders in positions of power finally have the courage to stand up for them, to stop relegating them to the "have nots" and stop sending them back to failing educational settings.

Kathryn Meyer, attorney, Center for Children's Advocacy: My wish for 2021 is for a disruption to the educational funding structure in our state. The pandemic shone a spotlight on educational inequity, and further exacerbated it. It's time to use this renewed attention and vigor to recommit to fundamental change.

Justin Elicker, Mayor, New Haven: I wish that while we move past 2020 we do not leave behind the lessons it taught us — that economic and racial stratification is the central problem of our state, and we need to act decisively to address it with real policy change and economic resources.

Fran Rabinowitz, CT Association of Public School Superintendents: That every child will be positively influenced by a caring adult. Every child will know she/he matters and is an amazing gift to this world.

David McGuire, Executive Director, ACLU of Connecticut: Our greatest wish for 2021 is that people who are incarcerated are safe, healthy, and treated with dignity — through an executive order from Gov. Lamont safely releasing people to their loved ones during the pandemic, through a vaccine rollout that includes incarcerated people in the same phase as others in congregate settings, through the closure of Northern Correctional Institution, and through money saved from prison closures being reinvested in programs to support people most directly harmed by incarceration, especially disproportionately harmed Black and Latinx people.

Angel Quiros, Department of Correction Commissioner: The one word that comes to mind when I think about a wish for 2021 is "unity." This would fulfill every aspect of my life and others'. The love within my family can only grow with unity, the employees within my organization that I have the privilege to lead will be even more victorious in their duties to prepare people for a successful life in the community, and the incarcerated population we care for will thrive as good neighbors upon release, if we all unite to support them. After the year we have had, it's time for peaceful, yet strong solidarity. I plan to play my part in making this wish come true, and I hope you all will join me.

Alicia Kinsman, attorney, Connecticut Institute for Refugees and Immigrants: Working with immigrants, refugees and asylum-seekers in 2020 has been more challenging than ever, with 545 migrant children still missing from their parents, growing case backlogs, diminishing protections for vulnerable crime victims and asylum seekers — and a global pandemic. Yet every day I have been awe-struck and inspired by the resiliency of CIRI's clients and their families, who fight to overcome every obstacle they face. That spirit of optimism and resiliency is what I'm taking into 2021, where I hope for a return to decency and humanity in our immigration policies and procedures, and that the United States may uphold its obligation to provide refuge for men, women and children seeking freedom from persecution.

Deidre Gifford, acting Commissioner Department of Public Health/Commissioner Department of Social Services: My top wish for 2021 is for a beginning of the return to safely being together with friends, families and colleagues. Many Connecticut residents have suffered from the effects of COVID. All of us have suffered from the effects of missing family, friends, weddings, funerals and so many of the other important people and events that mark our lives. In 2021, I wish that we all can begin to return to these events with a renewed appreciation for the value and importance of the loved ones and others who are dear to us.

Tiffany Donelson, President and CEO, Connecticut Health Foundation: This year brought a newfound awareness of the deadly impact of racism and the ways it has shaped and segmented our society. My wish for 2021 is that our state and nation will commit to acting upon that knowledge and truly working to acknowledge and address the impact of racism, especially the impact on health.

Amy Dowell, Director, Connecticut chapter of Education Reform Now
Our hope as an organization is to see meaningful legislation on literacy next year, because being able to read is the great equalizer.

Estela López, vice-chair, state Board of Education: My hope is that Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech finally becomes our reality. He had such a beautiful vision of everybody joining together and singing "Free at last," when we have gotten rid of all the preju-

dice and all the fear of being different and accepting each other. What better way to remind us of what he said, that dream that he had that hasn't become the reality yet.

Rep. Toni E. Walker, D-New Haven, co-chair of the Appropriations Committee : That we have a budget that reflects a more humanitarian approach to our society, that looks at the values of Connecticut ... making sure no people are left behind.

Rep.-elect Aimee Berger-Girvalo of Ridgefield: What I wish for most is that we can take the hard lessons we learned in 2020 and turn them into something we're really proud to look back on one year from now.

University of Connecticut President Thomas C. Katsouleas: Scientific innovations that end the pandemic, meaningful racial and cultural equality in our society – and the perfect wave.

Kevin Maloney, Connecticut Conference of Municipalities: CCM wishes that state leaders will engage local leaders as full-fledged partners in governing Connecticut residents and businesses in 2021.

Rep. Brandon McGee, D-Hartford: I wish we would use this crisis as an opportunity to cut through the inertia in policy-making that prevents us from meaningfully addressing systemic racism. For so long, we have talked about the problems and discussed the solutions, but we lack the will to change anything. Why not now? Everyone will have to make sacrifices for all of us to have better health and economic prosperity, and it finally seems like we are reaching a critical mass of people who understand how disenfranchised people of color are in this state and country and want to do something about it. We should make bold changes now.

Sara Bronin, founder, DesegregateCT: My wish is that everyone who rallied for a more just world in 2020 works in 2021 to reform zoning — one of the most important powers of government — to create a more equitable, sustainable, and inclusively prosperous state. Eliminating outdated zoning laws that have stunted economic growth and led to racial and socioeconomic inequality will enable every Connecticut resident, interconnected as we are, to thrive together.

House Republican Leader Vincent J. Candelora of North Branford: The year is one that has arisen a sense of humility. I hope that continues.

Gov. Ned Lamont: Let's get to 2021 as fast as we can.