

ANITA FORD SAUNDERS (CT SD-09)
MAY 2026

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BIOGRAPHY AND KEY FACTS



Biography:

Anita Ford Saunders, APR, is the founder and owner of Anita Ford Saunders Communication. She is a veteran in the communication and public relations profession, with more than 30 years of experience creating and implementing strategic communications plans.

Breaking Barriers in Broadcasting

As VP of Corporate Communications for Connecticut Public Television & Radio, Anita led an award-winning staff. Among her noteworthy achievements there, she oversaw the implementation of strategic promotion for the premiere of UConn Women's Basketball on CPTV. This ground-breaking relationship was the catalyst for broadcasting women's basketball on a national level. In addition to her work at CPTV, Anita perfected her craft at WFSB-TV 3, WVIT-NBC 30, and television stations in Washington, DC, Michigan, and Massachusetts.

Award-Winning Career

In her broadcast career, she won 3 Emmy awards from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, a First Place award for Excellence in Journalism from the Society of Professional Journalists, a Ciné Golden Eagle award for Amistad Connecticut: A Legacy Reborn, and a Frederick Douglas Media Award from the CT Chapter of NAACP. She also won Gold and Silver Mercury Awards from the CT Valley Chapter of Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and a first-place award for excellence in journalism from the Society for Professional Journalists. She was named Journalist of the Year – Region 1 by the National Association of Black Journalists.

She also served as Director of Advancement Communications at Trinity College and held senior-level positions at United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut, Yankee Gas Services Company, and the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (HFPG).

National Leadership

In her professional association, Anita rose to national prominence. She served as a co-chair of the PRSA National Diversity & Inclusion Committee, a member of the Board of Directors, and on PRSA's Board of Ethics and Professional Standards (BEPS).

She was honored in 2022 by PRSA Greater CT with its Practitioner of the Year Award. The award recognized her leadership on both a local and national level in the nonprofit, consulting, and small business space.

KEY FACTS

Full name: Anita Ford Saunders

DOB: July 28, 1955

Family: Husband, Les; Two sons, Aaron and Lucas

Current Residence: 14 Brookview Lane, Middletown, CT 06457

Education:

- 1996: M.S. in Organizational and Managerial Communications, Central Connecticut State University
- 1977: B.A in Broadcast Communications, American University

Professional Career:

- 2002-Present: Owner, Anita Ford Saunders Communication
- 2023-Present: President, Middlesex County NAACP
- 2017-2020: Director of Advancement Communications, Trinity College-Hartford
- 2017: Project Manager, URU
- 2013-2016: Director of Marketing and Communications, United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut
- 2012-2013: Communication Manager, Yankee Gas
- 1999-2003: Senior Communications Officer, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
- 1995-1999: Vice President of Corporate Communications, CT Public Television

In 2024, Anita won the prestigious D. Parke Gibson Legacy Award of the Public Relations Society of America. The award nationally recognizes a public relations professional who has helped increase awareness of public relations within multicultural communities and participated in the promotion of issues that meet the special informational and educational needs of diverse communities.

Community Service

In her volunteer efforts in Connecticut, Anita serves on the Steering Committee of the Women's Wellness Fund of Middlesex Health and is vice chair of The Connecticut Democracy Center Board of Directors.

She has also served on many boards, including the CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence, CT Nonprofits, the Fund for Greater Hartford, the CT Council for Philanthropy, Capital Prep-Middletown, Ambassador for The Village, and the Foundation for Educational Opportunities.

As an exclamation to her community service, Anita was elected in December of 2022 to a two-year term as president of the Middlesex County CT Branch of the NAACP. She was re-elected for an additional term in 2025. In her first year the branch won the statewide award for membership. The Branch also earned the W.E.B. Du Bois Civil Rights Advocacy Award in the first and third year of her presidency.

Anita is a Life Member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. and a past president of the Epsilon Omicron Omega Chapter of this international service sorority.

Education and Family

Anita Ford Saunders holds a B.A. in Communication from American University and an M.S. in Organizational and Managerial Communication from Central CT State University. She earned the designation of APR from the Universal Accreditation Board of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA).

She lives in Middletown with her husband Les, who taught in the Middletown Public School system for more than thirty years. Their two grown children, both of whom attended and graduated from Middletown public schools, are Aaron and Lucas. [Saunders for Senate Campaign Website, accessed 4/21/26]

VULNERABILITIES

HIGHLIGHTS

CAPITAL PREP MIDDLETOWN

SAUNDERS IS CO-CHAIR OF A CHARTER SCHOOL THAT WOULD COST MIDDLETOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS UP TO \$14.8 MILLION OVER SIX YEARS — ACCORDING TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S OWN FISCAL ANALYST

- Saunders is co-chair of the Capital Prep Middletown Planning Committee and is named as a founding member of the proposed charter school in the 518-page application filed with the State Board of Education in February 2023.
- A March 2023 General Assembly fiscal analyst study examining Education Cost Sharing and Alliance District funding for fiscal years 2024-2029 found that Middletown public schools could potentially lose as much as \$14.8 million in education funding over the first six years of the charter school's existence.
- The non-partisan School + State Finance Project, citing Connecticut General Statutes § 10-66ee(a), concluded directly that "some towns may receive less ECS funding due to the opening of a state charter school than they otherwise would have received had the school not opened" — and that Alliance Districts like Middletown are only "partially shielded" from charter funding loss.
- Saunders has publicly disputed the math, telling the State Board of Education in March 2023 that "the money does not follow the student," and testifying to the General Assembly in February 2026 that public charter schools "do not take money away from any student attending a neighborhood public school."

THE MIDDLETOWN RACIAL JUSTICE COALITION, AFT CONNECTICUT, AND THE CT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION ALL OPPOSED CAPITAL PREP MIDDLETOWN

- The Middletown Racial Justice Coalition — a local organization working on issues affecting Black and brown families in Middletown, the same constituency Saunders claims Capital Prep would serve — wrote in an April 21, 2023 letter to lawmakers: "Capital Prep Middletown will not eradicate the issues of racism for all, or even most, of our children of color in Middletown." The MRJC argued the money should instead be used to improve existing public schools.
- The Connecticut Education Association, the state's largest teachers' union, has urged the State Board of Education to "reject charter school expansion efforts that are draining critical funds away from neighborhood public schools and causing irreparable harm to the state's poorest school districts."
- AFT Connecticut has publicly argued the "money follows the child" concept is "severely flawed" because the departure of even one student creates a financial ripple effect that affects remaining public school students; AFT-CT calculated the average per-pupil dollar loss at \$14,122.

SAUNDERS COMPARED CONNECTICUT'S PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM TO SOUTH AFRICAN APARTHEID — AND PUBLICLY ACCUSED INCUMBENT SEN. MATT LESSER OF A "RACIST" "11TH-HOUR" MOVE TO BLOCK CHARTER FUNDING

- At the October 8, 2025 State Board of Education Special Meeting at North Haven High School, Saunders told the board that opponents of Capital Prep Middletown were "maybe using South Africa as a model for education, helping to keep educational apartheid alive and well in Middletown."
- In June 2023, Saunders, as Middlesex County NAACP President, publicly named Lesser and Hochadel as the lawmakers she said blocked Capital Prep Middletown's \$4.75M in anticipated state funding "at the 11th hour" — and the statewide and Middlesex NAACP called the decision "racist."
- In May 2025, Saunders escalated, telling the State Board of Education that state agencies were "weaponizing" Connecticut law to "keep marginalized communities and children from thriving."

- In October 2025, Saunders called the continued denial of Capital Prep Middletown "a shame and it's a crime" and pledged "we're not going to stop until we get this school."
- Saunders testified for Capital Prep funding before the General Assembly's Appropriations Committee on February 17, 2026 — less than two weeks before formally launching her State Senate campaign against Lesser.

DEFENSE OF MIDDLETOWN SCHOOLS SUPERINTENDENT MICHAEL CONNER

SAUNDERS WAS PAID TO ATTACK THE CREDIBILITY OF WOMEN WHO ACCUSED MIDDLETOWN'S SUPERINTENDENT OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT — DISMISSING THEIR ALLEGATIONS AS "LACK[ING] CREDIBILITY"...

- In October 2021, Saunders served as paid spokeswoman for Middletown Superintendent Dr. Michael Conner during an independent investigation into workplace harassment claims.
- Saunders publicly attacked the credibility of the complaints that triggered the investigation, calling them "second- and third-hand accounts from anonymous sources" that "lack credibility" and claiming they "shouldn't be used to initiate an investigation."
- The investigation was triggered by 22 anonymous letters from female education professionals plus 30 complaints from union members.

...BUT THE INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION SUBSTANTIVELY CONFIRMED THE CORE SEXUAL MISCONDUCT ALLEGATION SAUNDERS PUBLICLY DISMISSED

- The Middletown Board of Education hired outside counsel Thompson Hine in November 2021 to conduct a months-long investigation. On May 18, 2022 the firm released findings determining that Conner "likely made unwelcome romantic and sexual statements and advances towards a senior administrator."
- Conner was placed on leave at his own request in October 2021 — the same month Saunders was quoted defending him publicly — and resigned as superintendent on March 3, 2022 before the investigation's findings were released.

A FEDERAL CIVIL RIGHTS LAWSUIT BY THE FORMER ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT — NOW THE CROMWELL SUPERINTENDENT — ALLEGED YEARS OF GRAPHIC SEXUAL HARASSMENT, INCLUDING A FORCIBLE KISS

- Former Middletown Associate Superintendent Enza Macri (now Cromwell Public Schools Superintendent) filed a federal civil rights lawsuit on June 8, 2022 naming Conner individually plus the City of Middletown and Middletown Board of Education as defendants.
- Macri alleged Conner summoned her to his office, pushed his chair until their knees touched, trapped her in her seat by putting his hands on the arms of her chair, and said in substance that "the size of my penis would feel so good in you" before asking her to travel a day early to an overnight conference with him.
- Macri alleged that on February 5, 2019 Conner used his body to block the door of his office, held it shut, said he wanted to kiss her, and when she tried to leave leaned in and kissed her on the cheek — conduct that forms the basis for her battery and assault claims against Conner individually.
- Macri's amended complaint added evidence that Conner may have sexually harassed other women, including a woman from his previous New Haven job and another anonymous letter describing Conner pulling female administrators into his office to discuss his previous girlfriends.

THE CASE SETTLED IN FULL — REQUIRING APPROVAL FROM THREE SEPARATE BODIES INCLUDING THE INSURANCE CARRIER'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- On March 27, 2023, Federal Judge Sarala V. Nagala issued an order stating the case had been "settled in full," ending the litigation without Conner being vindicated by a court ruling on the merits.

- The March 24, 2023 letter to Judge Nagala disclosed that the settlement required approval from three separate bodies — the Middletown Board of Education, the insurance carrier's Claims Advisory Committee, and the insurance carrier's Board of Directors.

NOTE: The Offer of Compromise was filed under seal and the financial terms of the settlement are not public. Two-tier insurance carrier approval typically signals a substantial settlement amount, not a nuisance payout.

YANKEE GAS

SAUNDERS WORKED AS COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER AT YANKEE GAS— A ROLE SHE EVEN DESCRIBES AS REPRESENTING “THE DARK SIDE” — WHERE HER JOB DUTIES INCLUDED PROMOTING "NATURAL GAS EXPANSION"

- From April 2012 through September 2013, Saunders worked full-time as Communication Manager at Yankee Gas, a division of Northeast Utilities, based in Berlin, CT.
- On her own LinkedIn profile, Saunders describes her job duties as enhancing perception of "key initiatives among external stakeholders to support natural gas expansion within footprint of largest energy company in Connecticut" and developing "public relations strategies for existing and potential gas customers to communicate an understanding of investment advantages and safety aspects of natural gas."
- On June 12, 2012, while in her Yankee Gas role, Saunders tweeted: "Yankee Gas supports CT's workforce. Natural Gas will keep CT working!"
- In 2024, Saunders discussed her experience at Yankee Gas as choosing to work for “the dark side” and said she felt unhappy there but took the job for the insurance after her husband retired.

YANKEE GAS / EVERSOURCE HAS BEEN REPEATEDLY FAULTED BY CONNECTICUT REGULATORS FOR ILLEGAL MARKETING AND SOUGHT THE LARGEST GAS RATE INCREASE IN STATE HISTORY

- Yankee Gas was rebranded as Eversource Energy in February 2015.
- In 2022, Yankee Gas paid a \$1,797,000 civil penalty to resolve PURA findings that the company mailed illegal marketing to approximately 3,594 Connecticut residents pushing them to convert homes to natural gas without the disclosures required by Connecticut General Statutes § 16-19d(f).
- In November 2024, Eversource's Yankee Gas subsidiary filed for a \$209 million rate increase — later revised to \$193 million — which Connecticut Attorney General William Tong called "the largest increase in delivery rates ever proposed by a gas distribution company in state history" and which sought to "boost residential rates by 43%."
- Eversource's storm response has repeatedly drawn state action: a 2021 settlement following Tropical Storm Isaias required Eversource to return \$103.4 million to ratepayers and provide \$65 million in bill credits over its "inadequate response," and in December 2025 AG Tong urged PURA to reject almost \$1 billion in Eversource's outstanding 2018-2023 storm-cost recovery plus \$340 million in interest payments.

SINGLE-PAYER HEALTH CARE

AS THEIR DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS, SAUNDERS WALKED BACK THE URBAN LEAGUE OF GREATER HARTFORD SUPPORT FOR SINGLE-PAYER HEALTH CARE — CITING THE BOARD'S INSURANCE INDUSTRY TIES

- In October 1993, as Director of Development and Public Relations at the Urban League of Greater Hartford, Saunders publicly disowned the Urban League's listed support for a Canada-style single-payer health care system, telling the Hartford Courant the League "never has endorsed" single-payer "and does not now."
- Saunders explicitly cited the Urban League's insurance industry funding and board composition in disowning single-payer — noting that the League's board seats included executives from Allstate, CIGNA Corp.,

Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Co., Travelers, Phoenix Home Life Mutual Insurance, Aetna Life & Casualty, and ITT Hartford Insurance Group.

- Saunders said the Urban League would "have to withdraw from the coalition" if it endorsed single-payer and that no Urban League representative was empowered "to endorse something like that ... without first going to the board of directors."

SUPPORT FOR CONSERVATIVE ALIGNED INDEPENDENT GWEN SAMUEL OVER A DEMOCRAT

ON NOVEMBER 2, 2024 — THREE DAYS BEFORE ELECTION DAY — SAUNDERS DONATED \$50 TO THE STATE SENATE CAMPAIGN OF GWEN SAMUEL, WHO WAS CHALLENGING AFT CONNECTICUT PRESIDENT SEN. JAN HOCHADEL

- Saunders donated \$50 to Mama Gwen 2024, the candidate committee of Gwen Samuel for Connecticut State Senate District 13, on November 2, 2024 — three days before the November 5 general election.

SAMUEL RAN ON THE INDEPENDENT LINE BUT WAS CONSERVATIVE-ALIGNED AND THE LEADER OF THE CONNECTICUT PARENTS UNION

- Samuel founded and leads the Connecticut Parents Union, a charter school and school-choice advocacy group.
- Samuel headlined Republican gubernatorial candidate Bob Stefanowski's 2022 "Parental Bill of Rights" rollout, which proposed ending school mask mandates, prohibiting transgender athletes from competing in female competitions, requiring parental consent for sex education, and expanding charter/magnet/technical schools.
- At the same Stefanowski event, Samuel suggested separate competitions for transgender athletes, "like Special Olympics" — opposing the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference's transgender-inclusive sports policy.

BLACK LIVES MATTER AND LGBTQ INCLUSION

IN 2016, SAUNDERS QUESTIONED WHETHER THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT'S INCLUSION OF LGBTQ BLACK PEOPLE WOULD ALIENATE THE BLACK CHURCH — TELLING A PUBLIC PANEL: "CHURCH AIN'T NECESSARILY GONNA BUY INTO THAT"

- At a February 17, 2016 Tunxis Community College Black Lives Matter panel, Saunders said: "How welcome will the black church be when the Black Lives Matter Movement affirms the lives of black queer and trans folks. Think about that. Church ain't necessarily gonna buy into that."
- At the same panel, Saunders critiqued the Black Lives Matter movement's overall message as "diluted" and said BLM should "take a cue from the traditional organization" like the NAACP and Urban League.
- Saunders also criticized a Black Lives Matter action at a Connecticut Forum panel on racism, where activists used a megaphone to disrupt the event, saying "What good did that do? It did nothing but Disrupt."

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

PERSONAL INFORMATION

FAMILY

Saunders' Campaign Website Said Her Husband Les Taught In The Middletown Public School System For More Than 30 Years And That Her Two Sons, Aaron And Lucas, Both Graduated From Middletown Public Schools. "She lives in Middletown with her husband Les, who taught in the Middletown Public School system for more than thirty years. Their two grown children, both of whom attended and graduated from Middletown public schools, are Aaron and Lucas." [Saunders 4 State Senate, [Accessed 5/04/26](#)]

On Oct. 13, 2013, Saunders Announced Her 30th Wedding Anniversary With Husband Leslie L. Saunders"Praises to God for being able to celebrate thirty years with my husband, Leslie L. Saunders." [@afscomm Twitter, [10/13/13](#)]

FATHER

Saunders' Father, Alfred D. Ford, A Pharmacist Who Co-Founded "The 1st Professional Black Business In Hartford" — Ford James Pharmacy In 1960 — Died In March 2008 At Age 90; She Is Listed As A Surviving Daughter Alongside Her Husband Les And Sons Aaron And Lucas Saunders. "Alfred D. Ford, R.Ph, 90, of Hartford died Tuesday (March 4, 2008). Born to George Washington Ford and Evergreen Threat Ford, he was raised in Columbus, GA. and graduated from Spencer High School. He moved to Hartford after serving in World War II, later graduating from the UCONN School of Pharmacy. [...] Overcoming seemingly insurmountable obstacles, he co-founded Ford James Pharmacy in 1960, the 1st professional Black business in Hartford. He retired in 1980. An active member of Union Baptist Church, he served as a trustee for several years. He was a Charter Life member and first initiate of the Beta Sigma Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. He was also a life member of the UCONN Pharmacy Alumni Assoc.; Prince Hall Masons - Excelsior Lodge #3; and Carpe Diem Fraternity. [...] He leaves two daughters, Alceen Ford-Meggett, (Bruce); and Anita Ford Saunders, (Les); grandchildren, Christina Burton, and Aaron & Lucas Saunders." [Hartford Courant, 03/09/08]

In A January 2022 Pre-MLK Day Profile, Saunders, Then 2022 Co-Chairwoman Of The Public Relations Society Of America Diversity & Inclusion National Committee, Recalled Her Father Took Part In The 1963 March On Washington And Said "I Remember Watching Our TV In Black And White And Swearing I Could See My Dad In A Crowd Of People." "MIDDLETOWN — For all the strides the country made since the civil rights movement, there is still much to be done to honor the teachings of Martin Luther King Jr., resident Anita Ford Saunders said. Growing up in Hartford, her father took part in the 1963 March on Washington. "I remember watching our TV in black and white and swearing I could see my dad in a crowd of people," she said, laughing at the memory. "Scores" of people joined him, Saunders said. "I remember the buses lined up on Main Street, and my mom, sister and I, dropping him off to get on the bus with so many other people." Now, she cherishes the "old-school" briefcase case her father carried with him, said Saunders, the 2022 co-chairwoman of the Public Relations Society of America Diversity & Inclusion National Committee. "It means a lot to me that that attache case went with my dad to the March on Washington." [The Middletown Press, 01/14/22]

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In March 1998, Saunders Was The Featured "Motivational Speaker" At Middletown High School's Schoolwide Career Day, Where She Told Students They Have "A Responsibility" To Themselves And "Have To Take Ownership Of Your Life." "The morning will also feature a lecture by motivational speaker Anita Ford Saunders. All students will attend. Saunders, a Connecticut native, is vice president of corporate communications at Connecticut Public Television and will speak to students about choices and taking responsibility for one's future. "I would like the students to understand that they have a responsibility to themselves," Saunders said. "It's not always someone else's fault; you have to take ownership of your life and make it work for you." [Hartford Courant, 03/25/98]

In June 1999, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church In Bloomfield Honored Saunders, Then CPTV Vice President Of Corporate Communications, As One Of Six Connecticut Media Members Recognized For "Dedication And Commitment To Their Industry." "Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Bloomfield will honor six members of the news media for their dedication and commitment to their industry. "We want to honor these individuals

for the good job that they have done," said Garland D. Higgins, a church member. Dee Griffin, a WFSB-TV, Channel 3 reporter; Lou Brown, a WVIT-TV, Channel 30 reporter; William Roy Hales, publisher of the Hartford Inquirer; Eddie Jordan, a WKND-AM radio disc jockey; Anita Ford Saunders, vice president of corporate communications with Connecticut Public Television & Radio; and Johnny Mason Jr., The Courant's Faith and Fellowship columnist, will be honored at a June 27 ceremony." [Hartford Courant, 06/03/99]

In April 1999, Saunders, Then CPTV Vice President Of Corporate Communications, Was Tapped To Moderate A New Britain YWCA Panel On "The Changing Face Of Leadership In The New Millennium" Sponsored As Part Of The National YWCA's "Day Of Commitment To Eliminate Racism." "The public may attend a free program on "The Changing Face of Leadership in the New Millennium," to be held Wednesday at 7 p.m. at the YWCA of New Britain, 22 Glen St. The YWCA is sponsoring the event as part of the national YWCA's celebration of the National Day of Commitment To Eliminate Racism. Anita Ford Saunders, vice president of corporate communications for Connecticut Public Television and Radio, will moderate a panel discussion on the topic." [Hartford Courant, 04/29/99]

HOLZBERG YOUTH PROGRAMS & PR BOARD SERVICE (1996-2002)

In November 1996, Then-Middletown Mayor Maria Madsen Holzberg Appointed Saunders To A Newly Created Advisory Committee Charged With Reviewing Proposals For Neighborhood-Based Youth Programs And Recommending Recipients For A \$25,000 City Fund. "Once the proposals are in, a newly appointed advisory committee will review each idea and weigh its merits. Mayor Maria Madsen Holzberg appointed adults and teenagers to the committee this week. The committee will eventually make recommendations on which of the proposals should receive money from a \$25,000 fund that city officials set aside for local youths. [...] Members of the new advisory committee include mayoral aide Tina Gomes, Youth Services Director John LaRosa, Parks and Recreation Director Wes Downing, Councilman Jesse Salafia and school board member Barbara Weiss. The other members are Anita Saunders, Donna Patrick, Deborah Petruzzello, Lesley J. MacDonald, Jessica Perry, Gina Hernandez, Daniel Cappetta and Tim Dutcher. [...] The need for more local youth programs was pushed to the forefront last month when 16-year-old Omar Irving was shot and killed in what police say was a drug-related dispute on Ferry Street in the North End." [Hartford Courant, 11/30/96]

HARTFORD FOUNDATION FOR PUBLIC GIVING ERA (2001-2003)

Saunders Touted Hartford Foundation For Public Giving Annual Women & Girls Event As An Unusually Diverse Networking Opportunity: "Usually, You Hang Out With People Of Your Own Profession Or Clique. I Mean, It's Power." "It is the No. 1 schmoozing opportunity, a perfect time for women to see all the movers and shakers," said Diane Alverio, partner of Baldwin/Alverio Media Marketing, New Britain, who flew in Wednesday from Marco Island, Fla. "All these women take out their checkbooks — they show their own power." "I don't think any event brings together such a diverse group," said Anita Ford Saunders, senior communications officer of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. "Usually, you hang out with people of your own profession or clique. I mean, it's power." [Hartford Courant, 03/30/01]

In January 2002, Saunders Was Listed As An At-Large Board Member Of A Connecticut Career Ladder Organization Whose Officers Were Profiled In The Courant. "Stoppelman, secretary; Alison Karam, immediate past president; and members at-large of the board, Howard Drescher; Amy Chepul Feest; Anita Ford Saunders; Kathleen Goffa; and Heather Tolly-Bauer." [Hartford Courant, 01/07/02]

In March 2002, Saunders Of The Hartford Foundation For Public Giving Was One Of Ten Women Honored As Inspirational Role Models At A Hartford School Assembly Where She Told Fourth- And Fifth-Graders That People "Can Never Take Away What You Know." "They have all been very important in my life," said McKinley, who invited a dozen women to the school as the culmination of a monthlong focus on family literacy and women in history. Anita Ford Saunders of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving emphasized the importance of reading during an assembly attended by fourth- and fifth-graders. She told students that people might be able to take away their PlayStation 2, or their FUBU and Tommy Hilfiger clothing, "but they can never take away what you know." Saunders was recognized for being an inspiration to young people, as were nine other women — including McKinley's wife, Robenia, who is the principal of a school in Bloomfield." [Hartford Courant, 03/29/02]

In January 2003, Saunders Facilitated A Harriet Beecher Stowe Center "Bridges To Safety" Discussion Connected To A Black Women Of The Underground Railroad Exhibit; She Led Audience Questioning Of Heroism In The Context Of Possible Iraq War. "After the panelists' presentations, the audience explored heroism in a discussion led by Anita Ford Saunders, the facilitator. The conversation touched on what seems like an inevitable conflict with Iraq. What prompts heroism? How do we give our children a sense of moral decency? What keeps people from standing up for

what is right? Is there anything you would stand up for, even if it means your arrest? Saunders asked the latter question of a teenager in the back of the room. With all the weighty topics discussed earlier, he couldn't think of anything worth getting arrested over. "At the moment, no," he said." [Hartford Courant, 01/13/03]

In February 2003, Saunders Of The Hartford Foundation For Public Giving Moderated A Black History Month Panel Hosted By Fleet Bank And The Black Professional Resource Group's Connecticut Chapter Titled "Honor Our History By Securing Our Children's Future." "Feb. 26, noon, Fleet Bank and the Black Professional Resource Group's Connecticut chapter present "Honor Our History By Securing Our Children's Future." Panelists are Stan Simpson, a columnist at The Courant, the Rev. Barbara E. Headley, senior pastor at Faith Congregational Church in Hartford, and Dudley Williams of the state Department of Education. Moderator is Anita Ford Saunders of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, and the host is Chandler Howard, president of Fleet Bank Connecticut. Fleet Bank, 777 Main St." [Hartford Courant, 02/15/03]

MIDDLESEX COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION BOARD SERVICE (2006-2008)

In February 2006, Saunders Was Elected To The Board Of The Middlesex County Community Foundation, Joining Other Trustees Re-Elected At The Group's Annual Meeting. "Herbert T. Clark III of Essex was re-elected chairman; Robert L. Kirkpatrick Jr. of Middletown and Sari Rosenbaum of Portland were elected vice chairmen; Patrick J. Crowley of Lyme was re-elected treasurer; Thomas J. Pastorello of East Hampton was elected assistant treasurer; and Ralph H. Shaw II of Middletown was re-elected secretary. Janice Atkeson of Essex, Thomas P. Kannam of Durham, Thomas J. Pastorello of East Hampton and Anita Ford Saunders of Middletown were elected to the board." [Hartford Courant, 02/16/06]

In February 2008, Saunders Continued As Vice Chair Of The Middlesex County Community Foundation Following Re-Election By Members. "At the foundation's annual meeting, members elected David Director of Cromwell and Susan Barrett Peters of Portland as directors. Both have extensive backgrounds in community service [...] Robert Kirkpatrick was re-elected chairman of the board, and Marcia Kalayjian of Durham and Anita Ford Saunders continue their roles as vice chairmen. Patrick Crowley of Lyme and Ralph Shaw II were re-elected as treasurer and secretary, respectively." [Hartford Courant, 02/27/08]

CONNECTICUT COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BOARD PRESIDENCY (2010)

As Board President Of The Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Saunders Was Quoted In June 2010 Praising Connecticut's New GPS Monitoring Law For Repeat Domestic Violence Offenders As "Really The First Step In Instituting Offender Accountability." "In addition, the new law provides employment protections for domestic violence victims, improves enforcement of protective orders and allows prosecutors to take into consideration all previous domestic violence offenses, including those committed out of state, for persistent offenders. "This is really the first step in instituting offender accountability," said Anita Ford Saunders, board president of the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence. "These comprehensive reforms will help strengthen our domestic violence laws, which are already some of the toughest in the nation," Rell said. "We must continue to do all we can to keep families safe and give police, prosecutors and others the tools they need to respond effectively to this serious, devastating issue."" [Hartford Courant, 06/08/10]

PUBLIC RECORDS

PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

14 BROOKVIEW LANE MIDDLETOWN, CT 06457

Saunders And Her Husband Leslie L. Saunders Jointly Own Their Home At 14 Brookview Lane, Middletown CT 06457 — A Three-Bedroom, 2.5-Bath Colonial With 2,166 Sq Ft Of Living Area On 0.39 Acres, Built In 1991, With Solar Panels (18 Units Listed); Per The Middletown Assessor's 2024 Records, The Property Has An Appraised Value Of \$390,530 And An Assessed Value Of \$273,370. "Owner: SAUNDERS LESLIE L & ANITA FORD. Address: 14 BROOKVIEW LA, MIDDLETOWN, CT 06457. Sale Date: 05/24/1991. Year Built: 1991. Living Area: 2,166. Style: Colonial. Stories: 2 Stories. Heat Fuel: Gas. Heat Type: Forced Air. Bedrooms: 3. Full Baths: 2. Half Baths: 1. Total Rooms: 7. Size (Acres): 0.39. SLR Solar Panels 18.00 UNITS. 2024 Appraised: Improvements \$280,610 + Land

\$109,920 = Total \$390,530. 2024 Assessed: Improvements \$196,430 + Land \$76,940 = Total \$273,370." [Town of Middletown Assessor (Vision Government Solutions), [Verified 5/04/26](#)]

VOTER REGISTRATION

Saunders Is A Registered Democratic Voter At Her Home In 14 Brookview Lane And Has Voted Regularly In Most Elections Since 2000. [NGPVAN, accessed 4/21/26]

COURT RECORDS

NOTE: No noteworthy court records involving Saunders were located.

PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION

ANITA FORD SAUNDERS COMMUNICATIONS

On Her Campaign Website, Saunders Described Herself As "Founder And Owner Of Anita Ford Saunders Communication" With "More Than 30 Years Of Experience" In Communication And Public Relations. "Anita Ford Saunders, APR, is the founder and owner of Anita Ford Saunders Communication. She is a veteran in the communication and public relations profession, with more than 30 years of experience creating and implementing strategic communications plans." [Saunders 4 State Senate, [Accessed 5/04/26](#)]

Saunders' Campaign Website Took Credit For Helping Launch UConn Women's Basketball Coverage Nationally, Saying Her CPTV Promotion Push Was "The Catalyst For Broadcasting Women's Basketball On A National Level." "As VP of Corporate Communications for Connecticut Public Television & Radio, Anita led an award-winning staff. Among her noteworthy achievements there, she oversaw the implementation of strategic promotion for the premiere of UConn Women's Basketball on CPTV. This ground-breaking relationship was the catalyst for broadcasting women's basketball on a national level. In addition to her work at CPTV, Anita perfected her craft at WFSB-TV 3, WVIT-NBC 30, and television stations in Washington, DC, Michigan, and Massachusetts." [Saunders 4 State Senate, [Accessed 5/04/26](#)]

In April 2025, After Middletown School Board Eliminated The District Communications Director Position In Its Budget, Saunders Disclosed She Had Been Hired By The District To Conduct A Schools Communications Audit In 2021 And Said She Was "Appalled, And Even A Little Bit Insulted Due To The Work I And Others In This System Had Accomplished." "The director of communications post, funded at \$159,000, was also eliminated. It will be replaced by a public information officer making \$80,000. Anita Ford Saunders, a resident who runs her own communication and public relations firm and was hired by the district to do a schools communications audit in 2021, spoke out in public comment over the decision to cut the director of communications position. "I was appalled, and even a little bit insulted due to the work I and others in this system had accomplished to identify critical communication issues," she said. She said she "examined the effectiveness and consistency of internal and external communications." The results "strongly" recommended the establishment of a communications department, she added. Ford Saunders lauded Lavorgna's many accomplishments, including "addressing the inconsistency of branding and lack of transparency that the school system was mired in, regaining trust that was lost." [The Middletown Press, 04/11/25]

DEFENSE OF MICHAEL CONNER

Saunders Was Identified As The Spokeswoman For Then-Middletown Superintendent Michael Conner In October 2021 As He Faced An Independent Investigation Into Workplace Harassment Claims. "Conner's spokeswoman, Anita Ford Saunders, said, 'This (has) been a stressful time for his family.' 'Dr. Conner and his family look forward to the independent investigation initiated by the Board of Education,' she said." [The Middletown Press, [10/21/21](#)]

Saunders Publicly Attacked The Credibility Of The Complaints That Triggered The Investigation, Calling Them "Second- And Third-Hand Accounts From Anonymous Sources" That "Lack Credibility" And Claiming They "Shouldn't Be Used To Initiate An Investigation." "Saunders alleged the report includes 'second- and third-hand accounts from anonymous sources,' which 'lack credibility' and shouldn't be used to initiate an investigation." [The Middletown Press, [10/21/21](#)]

The Investigation Saunders' Client Said He Welcomed Was Triggered By 22 Anonymous Letters From Female Education Professionals Plus 30 Complaints From Union Members, According To Court Filings. "[A]n investigation into Conner's conduct was not launched until the Board of Education received 30 complaints from union members and another 22 anonymous letters from female education professionals, including some who also alleged being harassed. The 22 education professionals anonymously sent letters to the board, explaining why some of them resigned and why Conner's behavior and the conduct of administrators who covered for him was creating a hostile work environment, the lawsuit said." [Garrison Law (citing Register Citizen), [11/03/22](#)]

The Middletown Board Of Education Hired Outside Counsel Thompson Hine In November 2021 To Conduct A Months-Long Investigation Into Claims Of Workplace Harassment Among District Administrators. "The Middletown Board of Education said a months-long investigation into claims of harassment among Central Office administrators showed that misconduct 'more likely than not' occurred. A full-scale investigation was initiated by the Board of Education in November 2021. Thompson Hine conducted the investigation, which ultimately found multiple administrators appeared to have engaged in inappropriate conduct." [NBC Connecticut, [5/18/22](#)]

The Independent Investigation Determined That Conner "Likely Made Unwelcome Romantic And Sexual Statements And Advances Towards A Senior Administrator," Substantively Confirming The Core Sexual Misconduct Allegation Saunders Had Publicly Dismissed. "The investigation determined that Conner likely made unwelcome romantic and sexual statements and advances towards a senior administrator. The report also mentions accusations of discrimination based on race, race/gender/age harassment, unprofessional or bullying behavior and more. All of these accusations were determined to be unfounded, stating that investigators didn't substantiate the allegations." [NBC Connecticut, [5/18/22](#)]

Conner Was Placed On Leave At His Own Request In October 2021 — The Same Month Saunders Was Quoted Defending Him Publicly — And Resigned As Superintendent On March 3, 2022, Before The Investigation's Findings Were Released. "Conner was placed on leave at his own request in October before the investigation started. It's unclear what specifically prompted the resignation. A 15-page letter sent to the former superintendent's home in March is under investigation. It's unclear if this is related to Conner's resignation." [NBC Connecticut, [5/18/22](#)]

Conner Publicly Maintained He Was "Unequivocally And Completely Innocent" Of The Allegations, Claiming In May 2022 That The Complaints Were "Intentionally Fabricated" To Push Him Out Of Office. "I am Unequivocally and Completely Innocent of the Alleged Allegations. [...] [E]vidence was shared with investigators and the BOE that the false allegations were intentionally fabricated as part of a plan to remove him from the Office of the Superintendent." [Middletown Eye, [5/2022](#)]

Conner Resigned As Middletown Superintendent On March 3, 2022 And Maintained That The Resignation Was Not Connected To The Harassment Allegations. "Conner resigned in May of 2022, but he said his resignation was not a result of these allegations and investigation." [Garrison Law (citing Register Citizen), [11/03/22](#)]

FEDERAL LAWSUIT AND SETTLEMENT

Former Middletown Associate Superintendent Enza Macri (Subsequently Cromwell Public Schools Superintendent) Filed A Federal Civil Rights Lawsuit On June 8, 2022, Naming Conner Individually Plus The City Of Middletown And Middletown Board Of Education As Defendants. "Macri lodged repeated verbal complaints to members of the school board and school district about Conner's allegedly increasingly inappropriate behavior toward her 'yet they took no action to protect her,' according to the lawsuit filed in federal court for the District of Connecticut on June 8." [CT Examiner, [6/19/22](#)]

- **Macri's Suit Alleged Years Of Sexual Harassment By Conner Including Forcible Kissing, Lewd Comments About Her Menstrual Cycle, And Retaliation When She Tried To Report Him.** "The suit claims years of sexual harassment, including Conner allegedly kissing Macri against her will, making lewd comments about her menstrual cycle and ostracizing her from her own job when she tried to report him." [Garrison Law (citing Register Citizen), [11/03/22](#)]
- **Macri's November 1, 2022 Amended Complaint Added Evidence That Conner May Have Sexually Harassed Other Women, Including A Woman From His Previous New Haven Job And Another Anonymous Letter Describing Conner Pulling Female Administrators Into His Office To Discuss His Previous Girlfriends.** "In at least one case, a woman who worked with Conner in his previous job in New Haven alleged in her letter to the board that she was also sexually harassed by the former Middletown superintendent, according to

excerpts taken from the letters, Pirrotti said in the lawsuit. Another anonymous statement said Conner would physically pull her and another administrator into his office, shut the door and then discuss his previous girlfriends, the anonymous letter said, according to the lawsuit." [Garrison Law (citing Register Citizen), [11/03/22](#)]

- **Macri Alleged Conner Summoned Her To His Office, Pushed His Chair Until Their Knees Touched, Trapped Her In Her Seat By Putting His Hands On The Arms Of Her Chair, And Said In Substance That "The Size Of My Penis Would Feel So Good In You" And That "They Do Not Make Condoms The Size To Fit Me" Before Asking Her To Travel A Day Early To An Overnight Conference With Him.** "On May 17, 2018, Dr. Conner summoned Dr. Macri to his office. Dr. Conner asked Dr. Macri why she was sitting so far away from him. He pushed his chair closer to her until their knees touched. He then leaned forward towards Dr. Macri and put his outstretched hands on the arms of her chair, effectively trapping her in her seat. [...] Dr. Conner told Dr. Macri, in substance, that 'the size of my penis would feel so good in you,' and that 'they do not make condoms the size to fit me.' Dr. Conner then asked Dr. Macri if she was getting her own hotel room for an upcoming overnight conference and asked her to go with him a day early." [U.S. District Court of Connecticut, ECF No. 29 (First Amended Complaint, ¶¶87-90), [11/01/22](#)]
- **Macri Alleged Conner Implicitly Threatened Her Career By Saying He "Only [Did] This" — Pursue Romantic Or Sexual Relationships — "With Women Who Have Just As Much To Lose" As He Did.** "Dr. Conner made very clear why he was targeting Dr. Macri. He said, in substance: 'I only do this' – that is, pursues a romantic or sexual relationship – 'with women who have just as much to lose as I do.' Dr. Macri immediately feared for her job and knew she needed to be cautious in her response." [U.S. District Court of Connecticut, ECF No. 29 (First Amended Complaint, ¶¶65-66), [11/01/22](#)]
- **Macri Alleged After Conner Lured Her Into His Small Office With Drawn Blinds For A DCF Phone Call, Conner Used His Body To Block The Door, Held It Shut, Said He Wanted To Kiss Macri, And When She Tried To Leave, Leaned In And Kissed Her On The Cheek Near Her Lips As She Turned Her Face Away — The Conduct That Forms The Basis For Macri's Battery And Assault Claims Against Conner Individually.** "On February 5, 2019, Dr. Conner summoned Dr. Macri to his office to join him in a call to DCF regarding a student. Such calls were usually made in the conference room, which has glass walls, but Dr. Conner arranged for Dr. Macri to meet him in his small office with the blinds drawn. After they called DCF, Dr. Macri got up to leave the room. Dr. Conner immediately rose, put his body between her and the door, and held the door shut. While blocking her from leaving the room, Dr. Conner told Dr. Macri that he wanted to kiss her and that he knew she wanted to kiss him too. Dr. Macri told Dr. Conner she wanted to leave the room. He replied she could leave if she gave him one kiss. Dr. Macri pushed past him and tried to open the door. As she did so, Dr. Conner leaned in to kiss her. Dr. Macri turned her face quickly and Dr. Conner's lips landed on her cheek, very close to her lips." [U.S. District Court of Connecticut, ECF No. 29 (First Amended Complaint, ¶¶130-132), [11/01/22](#)]
 - **Macri Alleged Conner Followed Her Into Her Office, Slammed The Door, And Told Her He Was Experiencing "White Bumps Around The Back Of My Neck" That He Said Happen When He Feels "Sensual For" A Woman Who Has Her Period — Macri Then Realized Conner Had Likely Seen Her Open Pocketbook With Tampons Visible On A Chair In Her Office.** "Dr. Conner responded that this was 'different stress' that caused him to experience white bumps around the back of his neck. Dr. Macri asked him if he had seen a doctor. He replied, in substance: 'No, it's not like that. This happens to me when I feel very close to a woman, and I feel something sensual for her, and she has her period.' Dr. Macri then realized that, while she was away from her office, she had left her open pocketbook with tampons visible on the chair next to her desk. Dr. Macri was petrified." [U.S. District Court of Connecticut, ECF No. 29 (First Amended Complaint, ¶¶135-136), [11/01/22](#)]
- **Macri's Lawsuit Also Alleged The Middletown School District's Title IX Coordinator Marco Gaylord Misled Her By Saying Nothing Could Be Done Without A Written Complaint, And Failed To Tell Her The District Could Investigate Confidentially With Anti-Retaliation Protections.** "In the lawsuit, Pirrotti also contended that the Middletown school district's Title IX coordinator, Marco Gaylord, who is responsible for dealing with complaints of sexual misconduct, erroneously told her client several times there was nothing he could do about Conner's behavior unless she filed a written complaint. Gaylord also failed to tell Macri that the district could investigate her claims without revealing her identity and would protect her against retaliation, the amended complaint said." [Garrison Law (citing Register Citizen), [11/03/22](#)]

On March 27, 2023, Judge Sarala V. Nagala Issued An Order Stating That The Case Had Been "Settled In Full" And Directing The Clerk To Administratively Close The File — Ending The Litigation Without Conner Being Vindicated By A Court Ruling On The Merits. "ORDER finding as moot Defendants' Motion to Dismiss, in light of the parties' report that this action has been settled in full, see ECF No. 53. Rather than continue to keep the case open on the docket, the Clerk is directed to administratively close the file immediately, without prejudice to reopening by any party on or before May 1, 2023. [...] If the parties wish to file a stipulation of dismissal, they may do so on or before May 1, 2023." [U.S. District Court of Connecticut, PACER Docket 3:22-cv-00754-SVN, ECF No. 54, [3/27/23](#)]

On March 24, 2023, Counsel For The Middletown Board Of Education And City Of Middletown Wrote To Judge Nagala Reporting A "Tentative Settlement" That Had Been Negotiated Since The October 2022 Mediation And Required The Approval Of Three Separate Bodies — The Middletown Board Of Education, The Insurance Carrier's Claims Advisory Committee, And The Insurance Carrier's Board Of Directors. "We are writing to advise you that the parties have reached a tentative settlement of the above-referenced matter. Counsel for the Plaintiff and the Board of Education have been negotiating since an October 2022 mediation and we have concluded an agreement in principle. This agreement will require approval of the Middletown Board of Education, as well as the insurance carrier's Claims Advisory Committee and its Board of Directors." [U.S. District Court of Connecticut, ECF No. 53 (Letter from Michael J. Rose to Judge Nagala), [3/24/23](#)]

- **The Settlement Letter Is Signed By Michael J. Rose Of Rose Kallor LLP — Counsel Only For The City Of Middletown And Middletown Board Of Education — And CC's Macri's Counsel Plus Conner's Two Individual-Capacity Lawyers, Suggesting The Settlement Is Between The Plaintiff And The Municipal Defendants With Conner's Individual-Capacity Claims Resolved Separately Or Concurrently.** "Very truly yours, Michael J. Rose [...] cc: Nina Pirrotti, Esq. Rene Dwyer, Esq. Ricardo Salmon, Esq." [U.S. District Court of Connecticut, ECF No. 53 (Letter from Michael J. Rose to Judge Nagala), [3/24/23](#)]

On June 27, 2023, The Parties Filed A Joint Stipulation Of Dismissal, Formally Closing Macri v. Middletown Board Of Education et al. "STIPULATION of Dismissal of Case (Joint) by Enza Macri." [U.S. District Court of Connecticut, PACER Docket 3:22-cv-00754-SVN, ECF No. 57, [6/27/23](#)]

PODCAST HOST

Saunders Hosted A Podcast Called "Sixty Plus: Sharing The Wisdom We've Earned" That Released Six Episodes Between August 2022 And March 2024 Featuring Hartford-Region Subjects Including Former Hartford Police Chief Bernard Sullivan, Hartford Reporter Lew Brown, CT Broadcaster Gerry Brooks, Rev. Dr. Shelley D. Best, Yoga Therapist Beth Gibbs, And Hartford Historian William "Rab" Smith. "Sixty Plus: Sharing the Wisdom We've Earned. By Anita Ford Saunders. This podcast features women, and men, who have crossed the threshold of a new season with cautious anticipation, joy, boldness, and conviction. Episodes: Sixty Plus: Sharing the Wisdom We've Earned: Former Htfd Chief of Police Bernard Sullivan (Aug 17, 2022); Hartford's Lew Brown speaks "Truth to Power" (Oct 03, 2022); Beth Gibbs and her Journey to Enlighten Up! (Dec 12, 2022); Rev. Dr. Shelley D. Best: Forged on Faith (Mar 02, 2023); Gerry Brooks: In His Own Words (Mar 01, 2024); William "Rab" Smith (Mar 09, 2024)." [Spotify for Creators, [Accessed 5/04/26](#)]

MIDDLESEX COUNTY NAACP

Saunders Said Her Plan As NAACP President Was To "Branch Out" Across Middlesex County To Towns Like Essex, Portland, And Cromwell That Were Underrepresented In The Organization. "Upon assuming her role in January, Ford Saunders made it her goal to branch out the NAACP to all towns in Middlesex County, particularly those now underrepresented in the NAACP. She plans to perform outreach in communities such as Essex, Portland, and Cromwell to bring more young people into the fold. "There's allies out there for this work and we just have to let people know we're here," she said. "There's a lot of voices that have been unheard. I hope the NAACP can be a convener of the voices of the people here, and we can make a difference at a lot of different levels in this county ... It's really important to me that people feel comfortable enough to share their ideas and speak their truth."" [The Middletown Press, [02/27/23](#)]

In September 2023, Saunders, As Middlesex NAACP President, Was Quoted In A Story About A Local "Pregnant With Possibilities" Doula Initiative Tackling Connecticut's Black Maternal Health Crisis: "It's A Trauma That Can't Be Reversed For Families. It's Critical That We Raise Awareness And Create Change." "In the local community, Pregnant with Possibilities, run through the Ministerial Fellowship and Greater Middletown Health Enhancement Community, strives to connect mothers of color with doulas and community health workers to support them on their journeys, and work to reduce preventable health complications. "There is such an impact on the Black community from

losing our mothers like this," Middlesex NAACP President Anita Ford Saunders said. "It's a trauma that can't be reversed for families. It's critical that we raise awareness and create change." [The Middletown Press, 09/22/23]

In January 2023, As Middlesex County NAACP President, Saunders Issued A Statement On The Death Of State Rep. Quentin Williams, A "Subscribing Life Member" Of The Branch, Saying His "Commitment Did Not Reflect An Expiration Date." "Williams was the director of advocacy and policy for Excellence Community Schools, a charter school program in Stamford. Middlesex County NAACP President Anita Ford Saunders wrote a statement Friday on behalf of the organization, of which Williams was a subscribing life member. "There are no words that can adequately express the sorrow and emptiness felt by the loss of Quentin Williams," she said, adding that his "commitment did not reflect an expiration date. It meant his commitment was for life. He understood the challenges and fought for those who were underrepresented in our community." [The Middletown Press, 01/05/23]

At Williams' January 2023 Memorial Service, Saunders, Identified As Williams' "Auntie," Read A Note From Vice President Kamala Harris Calling Williams "An Incredible Public Servant And Passionate Advocate For Civil Rights." "I know that Quintin's optimism and passion brought joy to so many and that his life will always shine brightly through you and all the lives he touched," Biden added. "It will take time, but I promise you the day will come when Quentin's memory will bring a smile to your lips before it brings a tear to your eye." Williams' "Auntie," Anita Ford Saunders, read a corresponding note from Vice President Kamala Harris. "Quentin was an incredible public servant and passionate advocate for civil rights as the first Black state representative for the city of Middletown. Quentin's tireless fight for a more equitable future for his community and our nation is a legacy that will continue to inspire the next generation of leaders," Harris wrote." [The Hartford Courant, 01/29/23]

In November 2023, Saunders, As Middlesex County NAACP President, Wrote A CT Mirror Op-Ed Responding To A Viral Video Of "Vile Behavior" By Two Middletown Residents, Calling It "Racism At Its Ugliest" And Urging The Mayor To Treat It "As A Hate Crime." "Weeks have passed and by now we have all seen the video of the vile behavior of two Middletown residents placing their 'privilege' on full display. Let's not tip toe. That was racism at its ugliest. Many people were surprised, 'aghast' even, yet those of us in this city and county who have been subjected to overt and covert racism in the form of hostile taunts, physical threats, or microaggressions, nodded our heads in confirmation that it was just another day in the neighborhood. First, I must applaud Jose Martin and his brother for the restraint they demonstrated. It was reflective of their professionalism, integrity, and grace. But they should have never had to deal with racist trash talk of any kind. In a statement on Facebook, Mayor Benjamin Florsheim said Middletown was 'a work in progress.' We can't respond to incidents like this with performative actions. The mayor was right to contact police. This should be considered a hate crime." [The Connecticut Mirror, 11/02/23]

- **Saunders Wrote That "Performative Rhetoric And Behavior Are Tolerated" In Middletown And That "Middletown Could Be That Shining Star Of Social Justice If We Could Just Get Out Of Our Own Way."** "People come here because they say Middletown is 'so diverse.' People leave our city because diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging are not fully embraced within our systems. Presently those systems are designed to let people slide when they exhibit racist behavior. They promise to do better, but they don't. Performative rhetoric and behavior are tolerated. We can't continue to merely 'reprimand' people or admit to our collective shame when we don't know what to say or more importantly, don't have the courage to do something. We need to hold people accountable, immediately and lead by example. When systemic racism rears its ugly head, our community and our leaders should act as quickly as we did in Martin's situation. To say Middletown is a 'work in progress' is an understatement. Middletown could be that shining star of social justice if we could just get out of our own way." [The Connecticut Mirror, 11/02/23]

In November 2023, Saunders, As NAACP President, Opposed The Nomination Of Middletown GOP Councilman Phil Pulino To The City's LGBTQIA+ And Anti-Racism Boards, Saying His Cable Show "Blatantly Denigrated Black Women, Black People And The LGBTQIA+ Community" And His "Mere Presence" On The Committees Was "Offensive And Repulsive." "Anita Ford Saunders, president of the Middlesex County NAACP, said Pulino hosted the show that "blatantly denigrated Black women, Black people and the LGBTQIA+ community." For his part, Pulino, a former Middletown Board of Education member, said Monday that the objections amount to slander. "Although I will always support the First Amendment rights of any American who agrees or doesn't agree with me, I will not support any form of slander," the councilman said. Pulino's "mere presence" on the two committees, Ford Saunders told council members, "is an insult to what we say we stand for to members of this community. It's offensive and it's repulsive." [The Middletown Press, 11/20/23]

In December 2023, As Council Democrats Denied Pulino The Two Committee Seats, Saunders Spoke Via Teleconference, Saying Pulino "Agrees With A Guest Or Co-Host When They Make Statements That Belittle Human Beings." "Much of the opposition to Pulino stems from an episode of "The Variety Hour," a cable television show

he co-hosts with Wilson, in which some viewers understood him to be agreeing with views they considered bigoted. Anita Ford Saunders, the president of the Middletown branch of the NAACP, speaking via teleconference, decried instances in which she said Pulino "agrees with a guest or co-host when they make statements that belittle human beings." [The Middletown Press, 12/05/23]

In March 2024, Saunders Characterized Cromwell School Bullying Incidents As "Hate Crimes" During Public Comment, Said She Was Not Surprised, Cited Other Incidents Of Racism Over The Years, And Called For A "Swift" Investigation. "Racism does exist in society and schools are a microcosm of society. We would be turning a blind eye if we said it did not exist in our schools," Macri said. "I was heartbroken and horrified to learn of their experience and thankful to the student(s) for stepping forward." During public session, Middlesex County NAACP President Anita Ford Saunders characterized the incidents as "hate crimes," noting that she wasn't surprised to hear about the students' experiences and there have been other incidents of racism over the years. "It has to stop," she said. Ford Saunders commended the students who spoke out. She called for a "swift" investigation to determine who the perpetrators are." [The Middletown Press, 03/22/24]

- **In June 2024, Saunders, As Middlesex NAACP President, Said An East Haddam Middle School Student Endured Racist Harassment From Peers Who Called Themselves The KKK, Including A Boy Who Threatened To "Whip" The Student In A Video; She Said One Of The Videos Used A Racial Slur "Hundreds Of Times."** "The messages "allegedly included racial slurs and sexually suggestive content," the agency's public information office said. Anita Ford Saunders, president of the Middlesex NAACP, said she wasn't sure how long the student faced the racial harassment, but the organization was made aware of the messages after receiving an email from the boy's father asking for help. "It's not a case of bullying on the playground, you know," Saunders said in a phone interview this week. "This has serious consequences and could really affect this young man — emotionally scar him for quite some time." She said the students involved called themselves the KKK. In one of the purported videos sent to the student, a boy threatened to whip the student, referring to him by a racial slur. Other harassing messages included a racial slur repeated hundreds of times." [The Middletown Press, 06/13/24]
- **At A June 2024 East Haddam School Board Meeting, Saunders Demanded Officials Investigate The Student Harassment As A Hate Crime And Told Them: "East Haddam, You Are Living Your George Floyd Moment. ... When You Choke The Life Out Of A Culture, You Are Preventing Someone From Breathing."** "Anita Ford Saunders, president of the Middlesex County NAACP, told board members she would like to see the incident investigated as a hate crime. Saunders, who has been in contact with the family, said it was the father of the student who saw the messages on his child's phone and took action. The child's father went to school officials asking for help, she said, weeks before any investigation was officially launched. Speakers were critical of officials' response as they said the harassment continued for months without consequences. "East Haddam, you are living your George Floyd moment," Saunders said. "Let's be clear, we have not seen the terror of a man being murdered and smothered in front of our eyes. But when you choke the life out of a culture, you are preventing someone from breathing. You are preventing a child from living the life they were destined to live. You are preventing a young soul from thriving. Look inside yourselves, you knew this was happening on some levels, how dare you let this fester." [The Hartford Courant, 06/14/24]

UNITED WAY OF CENTRAL & NORTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT (2013-2014)

In January 2013, Saunders Moderated A Russell Library Discussion On The Emancipation Proclamation Held In Connection With Middletown's 150th Anniversary Commemoration Of The Document; Mayor Daniel Drew And Schools Superintendent Patricia Charles Judged An Accompanying High School Debate. "The Middletown High School chorus will sing "The Star-Spangled Banner," and the Shiloh Baptist Missionary Church Male Chorus will perform. The Oddfellows Playhouse youth theater group will perform its holiday show, "A Civil War Christmas." Mayor Daniel Drew and Superintendent Patricia Charles will judge a debate by the Middletown High School debate club, and moderator Anita Ford Saunders will lead the audience in a discussion on the Emancipation Proclamation. The Common Council on Monday night recognized Russell Library for its commitment to offering educational programs." [Hartford Courant, 01/09/13]

In September 2013, Saunders Was Identified As The United Way Spokeswoman When Connecticut Attorney General George Jepsen Filed A Civil Complaint Alleging The Former Director Of Hartford's SAND Community Group Stole \$200,000; Saunders Said United Way Did Not Have Enough Information To Comment. "SAND was nonprofit dedicated to improving the economic, physical and social condition in Hartford's North End. The charity was a

primary provider of social services to the residents of the neighborhood, relying on both public and private donations, including operating money from the United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut. But the United Way funding dried up around 2009, Jepsen said. A spokeswoman for the United Way, Anita Ford Saunders, said Tuesday the organization did not have enough information about the lawsuit to comment." [Hartford Courant, 09/18/13]

In October 2014, Saunders, Then Head Of The United Way's Communications Department, Discussed A "Making Choices" Exercise The Charity Used To Show Donors The Plight Of Working Poor Families After Metro Hartford Was Ranked Last Out Of 50 Major U.S. Regions In Charitable Giving. "The organization is focusing on the story of the working poor, families where one car repair or one speeding ticket puts parents in a position of having to miss a regular bill or pay rent late. The United Way has potential donors try to put a budget together for a family of four, in an exercise called making choices. "The light goes off in people's heads," said Anita Ford Saunders, head of the United Way's communications department. "They see what people in the community are struggling with. They're working two, three jobs."" [Hartford Courant, 10/07/14]

1994-1999: CONNECTICUT PUBLIC TELEVISION & RADIO

Saunders Of Connecticut Public Television And Radio Was Among Visitors At A 1994 State Legislative Office Building Photo Exhibit Of Black Connecticut Professionals That A White State Library Police Officer Created In Response To A Tourist's Racist Remark; She Said The Display Made Her Smile. "Several people stopped to look at the photographs Wednesday. One, Anita Ford Saunders from Connecticut Public Television and Radio, was thrilled with the display. "This is great," she said. "This makes me smile. This really makes me smile." [...] The display has color portraits and some action shots. There are photos of retired Supreme Court Justice Robert D. Glass, the first black judge on the state's high court; Judge E. Curtissa R. Cofield, the first black woman on the state Superior Court bench; and Samuel C. Moore, director of the state Occupational Safety and Health Division." [Hartford Courant, 06/02/94]

As CPTV Vice President Of Creative Services, Saunders Criticized Aetna For Letting Go Of Black Education Consultant Bill Mason In A 1994 Hartford Courant Column, Saying "Corporations Can't See Talent" And Were "So Wrapped Up In Being Bigger And Better That They Don't Pay Attention To Detail." "Anita Ford Saunders, vice president of creative services at Connecticut Public Television, was upset that Aetna had let Mason go. "Corporations can't see talent. . . .," she said. "They're so wrapped up in being bigger and better that they don't pay attention to detail." "New ideas scare people, and Bill will scare you," she said. "It's OK to be afraid at first. Quiet fire — that's Bill."" [Hartford Courant, 08/29/94]

In September 1994, Saunders, As CPTV Vice President Of Creative Services And Special Projects, Confirmed The Network Laid Off 12 Employees Due To Tightened Bank Credit Restrictions, Saying "It Hurts. It Really Hurts," And That She Had To Lay Off One Of Her Own Employees. "Connecticut Public Television & Radio this week laid off 12 employees, citing tighter credit restrictions from its banks. The layoffs affected full-time and part-time workers, primarily at the television and radio network's Hartford headquarters, said Anita Ford Saunders, CPTV's vice president of creative services and special projects. A New Haven producer who works on Faith Middleton's radio program also lost his job. Connecticut Public Television & Radio employs about 75 people, Ford Saunders said. The layoffs took place Wednesday. Ford Saunders said Friday that banks that loan the broadcasting network money have tightened the lending rules in recent months. A one-year line of credit has been shortened to five months, and the public television and radio system now is required to have enough cash on hand to pay off the credit line, if the bank requested it, she said. "Our revenues and expenditures are fine. We're not overspending," she said. But "we do not have the liquid cash" without making the cuts. "It hurts. It really hurts," said Ford Saunders, who had to lay off one of her own employees." [Hartford Courant, 09/10/94]

- **Saunders Said No CPTV On-Air Programs Would Be Eliminated And No On-Air Employees Lost Their Jobs, But That Reporter Bob Douglas Would Be Moved To Contract Status, Letting CPTV Avoid Paying Benefits.** "Ford Saunders said that no radio or television programs are being eliminated and that she doesn't think viewers or listeners will notice any loss of quality. She acknowledged that remaining staffers will have to take on some extra duties. No on-air employees will lose their jobs, but Bob Douglas, the political reporter and public affairs program host, now will work on a contract basis. At least one other employee may be retained on contract. The company does not have to pay benefits for contract workers, as it does for regular employees. Public affairs programs, including Douglas' "On the Record," will not be affected, Ford Saunders said. Connecticut Public Radio, which lost the equivalent of 2.5 full-time workers, may feel the effects of the layoffs more sharply, because it has a smaller staff, she said." [Hartford Courant, 09/10/94]

In 1997, Saunders, Then CPTV Creative Services Vice President, Said Riverdance Could Pull In "\$20,000 A Night" In Hartford-Market Pledges, Putting The Show "In 'Three Tenors' Country" — She Joked, "I Like To Say 'Riverdance' Beat The Fat Boys." "When Los Angeles' flagship public TV station broadcasts "Riverdance, The Show," the take in a single night can be as much as \$50,000. Hartford's market is more modest, but Anita Ford Saunders, CPTV creative services vice president, says \$20,000 a night is not unusual. That puts the sprightly dancers in "Three Tenors" country. "That's a chunk of change," said Ford Saunders. "I like to say 'Riverdance' beat the fat boys." Ford Saunders would rather not examine the reasons for the phenomenal success of the stage show and its televised version, the videotape, the cassette, the CD and the attendant merchandise like key chains and mugs." [Hartford Courant, 02/19/97]

Saunders Was Among CPTV Staff Who Won A Regional Emmy From The National Academy Of Television Arts And Sciences Boston/New England Chapter In The "Target Audience Program" Category For "Amistad Connecticut: A Legacy Reborn" For The 1998 TV Season. "Connecticut Public Television won four regional Emmys from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences Boston/New England Chapter for the 1998 TV season. A story on Page F2 Wednesday about Emmys won by other Connecticut stations neglected to mention CPTV's awards: * Anita Coles, Glenn Orkin, Larry Rifkin, Anita Ford Saunders, David DiGiovanni and Ed McKeon in the Target Audience Program category for "Amistad Connecticut: A Legacy Reborn."" [Hartford Courant, Corr. 1999]

YANKEE GAS

2012-2013: Saunders Worked As Communication Manager At Yankee Gas, A Division Of Northeast Utilities Where Her Job Duties Included Supporting "Natural Gas Expansion" Within The "Footprint Of Largest Energy Company In Connecticut" And Developing Public Relations Strategies To Communicate "Investment Advantages And Safety Aspects Of Natural Gas" To Customers. "Communication Manager. Yankee Gas, a division of Northeast Utilities · Full-time. Apr 2012 - Sep 2013 · 1 yr 6 mos. Berlin, CT · On-site. • Enhanced awareness and improved perception of key initiatives among external stakeholders to support natural gas expansion within footprint of largest energy company in Connecticut. • Developed public relations strategies for existing and potential gas customers to communicate an understanding of investment advantages and safety aspects of natural gas. • Improved customer experience through on-site communications for crisis teams prior, during and post storm events for approximately 100,000 natural gas customers in Connecticut." [[Anita Ford Saunders LinkedIn](#), accessed 5/8/26]

Saunders Worked As Manager Of Communications For Yankee Gas Services Company, A Connecticut Natural Gas Utility That Was Rebranded As Eversource Energy In February 2015 — Putting A Decade-Plus Of Saunders' Career Inside The Same Eversource Corporate Family Connecticut Ratepayers Have Come To Identify With High Utility Bills. "Anita Ford Saunders is a veteran in the communication and public relations profession with over 30 years experience creating and implementing strategic communications plans for corporate and community-based organizations. [...] During her career, Anita has held communication roles at: ABC News, Connecticut Public Television, the United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, Yankee Gas Services Company (Manager of Communications), Trinity College, and Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center." [[UConn School of Public Policy bio](#), accessed 5/8/26]

On June 12, 2012, Saunders — Then In Her Yankee Gas Communications Manager Role — Tweeted Live From The Capital Workforce Partners Awards Breakfast: "Yankee Gas Supports CT's Workforce. Natural Gas Will Keep CT Working!". "@ Cap. Workforce Partners Awards Breakfast. Yankee Gas supports CT's workforce. Natural Gas will keep CT working!" [@afscomm Twitter, [06/12/12](#)]

February 2024: Saunders Described Her Own Decision To Take The Yankee Gas Job In Unflattering Terms, Calling It "The Dark Side" And Saying She Took It For Insurance Benefits When Her Husband Retired, Acknowledging That The Utility Job "Didn't Make Me Happy" And That She "Was Very Sad Walking Into The Door." "Stayed there for doing my own business for 10 years, and then went back into the dark side. My husband retired. So it's like, Okay, it's time for me to, you know, carry the load, carry the insurance load. You know, went back into a corporation, utility and big business corporation, not the place for me. It didn't make me happy. I was very sad walking into the door." [Communicate Like You Give A Damn Interview, [2/13/24](#)]

On The Same Day (June 12, 2012), Saunders Praised "Yankee Gas For Sponsoring" An Award To A Youth Recipient: "If You Think You Can't Achieve, Be Inspired By Nathan Orr, Winner Of Youth Award. Kudos To Yankee Gas For Sponsoring." "If you think you can't achieve, Be inspired by Nathan Orr, winner of youth award. Kudos to Yankee Gas for sponsoring." [@afscomm Twitter, [06/12/12](#)]

On Nov. 4, 2012, In The Aftermath Of Superstorm Sandy, Saunders Tweeted About Working "An Unbelievable 'Superstorm Sandy' Week" With Yankee Gas Colleagues. "This has been an unbelievable "Superstorm Sandy" week working with my colleagues at Yankee Gas. They exemplify... [linked image]" [@afscomm Twitter, [11/04/12](#)]

November 2024: Eversource's Yankee Gas Subsidiary Filed For A \$209 Million Rate Increase — Later Revised To \$193 Million — Which Connecticut Attorney General William Tong Called "The Largest Increase In Delivery Rates Ever Proposed By A Gas Distribution Company In State History" And Which Sought To "Boost Residential Rates By 43%." "Eversource-owned Yankee Gas requests \$209 million rate increase. [...] Yankee's request, which is the largest increase in delivery rates ever proposed by a gas distribution company in state history, will have a devastating financial effect on customers if approved, with Eversource's natural gas subsidiary seeking to boost residential rates by 43%." [WTNH News 8 / CT Attorney General, [11/14/24](#)]

2022: Yankee Gas Paid A \$1,797,000 Civil Penalty To Resolve PURA Findings That The Company Mailed Illegal Marketing To Approximately 3,594 Connecticut Residents Pushing Them To Convert Homes To Natural Gas Without The Disclosures Required By Connecticut General Statutes § 16-19d(f); \$1,750,000 Of The Penalty Was Directed To Energy-Assistance Nonprofit Operation Fuel For Customers Struggling To Pay Their Bills. "CONSUMER UPDATE: YANKEE GAS SERVICES PAYS NEARLY \$1.8 MILLION CIVIL PENALTY TO RESOLVE MARKETING DISCLOSURE VIOLATIONS. One of Connecticut's three natural gas local distribution companies, The Yankee Gas Services Company d/b/a Eversource Energy ("Yankee Gas"), recently paid a civil penalty of \$1,797,000 in order to resolve allegations that Yankee Gas failed to include legally required disclosures on marketing materials sent to Connecticut residents encouraging them to convert their homes to natural gas. Pursuant to orders issued by the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority, Yankee Gas transmitted \$1,750,000 of the penalty to Operation Fuel, an energy-assistance nonprofit, to be used to assist natural gas customers who are having trouble paying their bills." [CT Office of Consumer Counsel, [2022](#)]

Eversource Has Been Repeatedly Faulted By Connecticut Officials For Storm Response: A 2021 Settlement Following Tropical Storm Isaias Required Eversource To Return \$103.4 Million To Ratepayers And Provide \$65 Million In Bill Credits Over Its "Inadequate Response," And In December 2025 AG Tong Urged PURA To Reject Almost \$1 Billion In Eversource's Outstanding 2018-2023 Storm-Cost Recovery Plus \$340 Million In Interest Payments. "Eversource Energy will return millions to ratepayers and change some elements of its organizational structure under the terms of a new deal with the state designed to settle complaints over its handling of Tropical Storm Isaias. The \$103.4 million plan, brokered by Gov. Ned Lamont and state Attorney General William Tong, directs the utility to return \$65 million to customers in the form of two rate credits on their December and January bills. [...] On December 15, 2025, Eversource sought PURA approval to recover almost \$1 billion in projected storm costs for a series of catastrophic storms occurring between 2018 and 2023, as well as \$340 million in interest payments associated with those costs." [CT Attorney General / Hartford Business Journal, [Multiple](#)]

1993: URBAN LEAGUE OF GREATER HARTFORD

Saunders, Then The Urban League Of Greater Hartford's Director Of Development And Public Relations, Said The League "Never Has Endorsed" A Canada-Style Single-Payer Health Care System Despite Being Listed As A Member Of A Coalition Promoting It; She Cited The League's Insurance Industry Ties. "The Urban League of Greater Hartford, identified as a member of the coalition, was surprised to hear itself described as supporting a Canada-style system. Anita Ford Saunders, the league's director of development and public relations, said the league never has endorsed a single-payer option and does not now. The group, which has financial and other ties to the insurance industry, should not have been included in a written statement issued by coalition organizers, she said. [...] In addition to corporate contributions it gets from the insurance industry, the league has seats on its board filled by executives from Allstate, CIGNA Corp., Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Co., Travelers, the Phoenix Home Life Mutual Insurance Co., Aetna Life & Casualty Co. and ITT Hartford Insurance Group. That led important benefactors to call the urban league to ask what was going on, Saunders said." [Hartford Courant, 10/02/93]

- **Saunders Said The Urban League Would "Have To Withdraw From The Coalition" If The Charter Statement Endorsed A Single-Payer System And Said No Urban League Representative Was Empowered "To Endorse Something Like That ... Without First Going To The Board Of Directors."** "She traced the confusion to 1989, when someone who no longer is with the urban league signed a charter resolution Saunders described as a broadly written statement calling for universal and comprehensive health care. Yet a review of the charter resolution, also signed by other members now critical of the coalition, shows it contains more than a hint of an anti-insurance stance. A copy, provided by the citizens action group, compares health care in the United States unfavorably with that of Canada, where the provinces pay doctors and hospitals directly. The group's

stated goal was "to win a universal, comprehensive, single-payer state system." Saunders said that if the charter statement endorses a single-payer system, "We will have to withdraw from the coalition." Since those early days, the league has not been involved in coalition activities and has never backed a specific political reform plan. No representative of the urban league is empowered "to endorse something like that ... without first going to the board of directors." [Hartford Courant, 10/02/93]

MISCELLANEOUS

Saunders Was Credited As Associate Producer On Crystal R. Emery's 2016 Documentary "Black Women In Medicine," Which Featured Interviews With Dr. Joycelyn Elders (First Black U.S. Surgeon General) And Surgeon General Regina Benjamin; Per The American Film Showcase, Saunders' "40-Year Media Career" Included "Seven Emmy Nominations" With "Three Wins." "Anita Ford Saunders serves as Associate Producer for "Black Women in Medicine," a documentary that explores the history, contemporary issues and future possibilities of African-American women physicians by featuring the diverse voices of young medical students, practicing physicians and elder trailblazers. [...] Saunders is a seasoned writer and producer whose 40-year media career has included serving as Vice President of Corporate Communications for Connecticut Public Television & Radio and working in television and film production in locations including Washington DC, Michigan, and Massachusetts. She has been nominated for seven Emmy Awards and won three." [American Film Showcase, [Accessed 5/04/26](#)]

IMDB Credits Saunders With A Crew Role On The Documentary "Mommy, Who'll Take Care Of Me?: Forgotten Children Of The AIDS Epidemic." "Anita Ford Saunders | Additional Crew. Known for: Mommy, Who'll Take Care of Me?: Forgotten Children of the AIDS Epidemic; Black Women in Medicine." [IMDb, [Accessed 5/04/26](#)]

POLITICAL INFORMATION

NATIONAL POLITICS

When Joe Biden Withdrew And Endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris, Saunders, As Middlesex County NAACP President, Said She Was "Committed" To Biden's Campaign And Was Now "All In" For Harris; She Said She Had Just Attended The National NAACP Convention In Las Vegas Where She Saw An "Energized" Biden "Jog Off The Stage." "Harris brings a lot of energy to this race" When Barack Obama was elected, Anita Ford Saunders said that she wished her parents had been alive to witness the moment. Saunders, the president of the Middlesex County NAACP, said similar feelings stirred Sunday when she heard that Biden had "passed the torch" to Harris. For Saunders, the announcement came as a shock. Just last week, Saunders attended the National NAACP Convention in Las Vegas where she saw an "energized" Biden "jog off the stage" after his speech. Saunders said she was "committed" to Biden's campaign. Now, Saunders said she is "all in" for Harris. "I'm excited," Saunders said. "It does strike a new chord for the Democratic Party (with) reaching out to younger voters. Harris brings a lot of energy to this race and it sets it off in a different way." [The Hartford Courant, 07/24/24]

- **Saunders Faulted The Biden Campaign For Missing Opportunities On Black-Voter Outreach: She Said Biden's Team Failed To Promote His Work On "Student Debt, Housing And Immigration" To Black Voters.** "With polls showing slipping support for Biden among Black voters, Saunders said she believes "black voters will pay more attention" to a race between Harris and Trump after Saunders said the Biden campaign missed opportunities to advance messaging about the president's work on student debt, housing and immigration." [The Hartford Courant, 07/24/24]
- **Saunders Said Harris Should Not Be "Joe Biden 2.0" And Needed To "Cut Her Own Path"; She Said Harris Needed To "Set The Path That Kamala Harris Wants For This Country" And Be "The Leader Of A Democratic Party That Needs To Move Forward And Ensure That Democracy Stays Firm."** "Harris has got to craft her own message. She's got to cut her own path. She's not Joe Biden 2.0, she's Kamala Harris," Saunders said. "(The campaign needs) to set the path that Kamala Harris wants for this country, to be the leader of a Democratic Party that needs to move forward and ensure that democracy stays firm." [The Hartford Courant, 07/24/24]
- **Saunders Cautioned That Americans Should Not Be Distracted Into Thinking "We Have Arrived" Despite Harris' Rise, Citing "People Who Believe That People Of Color Should Be Marginalized, That We Should Take Black History Out Of Our History Books, That We Should Take Away A Woman's Right To Govern Her Own Body, That We Should Lock People Up Because They're Homeless."** "While Saunders described

Harris' rise as "a moment in time that speaks to progress," Saunders said Americans can not be distracted into thinking that "we have arrived." "We still have people who believe that people of color should be marginalized, that we should take Black history out of our history books, that we should take away a woman's right to govern her own body, that we should lock people up because they're homeless. This is not a democracy. That is not what America stands for," Saunders said. "What makes this country great is the diversity of people that make up this country," Saunders said. "I'm excited that, as far as history is concerned, this next season that we have in America, if it does come to pass, it could be led by a Black woman, a woman of color.'" [The Hartford Courant, 07/24/24]

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

CONNECTICUT STATE CONTRIBUTIONS				
Date	Recipient	Office / District	Party	Amount
01/09/2024	Kai 2024	State Representative (D-100)	Democrat	\$50.00
01/26/2023	Kai Belton 2023	State Representative (D-100)	Democrat	\$5.00
02/02/2020	Q Phipps 2020	State Representative (D-100)	Democrat	\$10.00
02/28/2024	Kai 2024	State Representative (D-100)	Democrat	\$20.24
03/28/2024	Impact CT, Inc.			\$50.00
05/17/2014	Denise Nappier For State Treasurer 2014	State Treasurer	Democrat	\$100.00
08/24/2022	Q Williams 2022	State Representative (D-100)	Democrat	\$10.00
09/07/2010	Nappier For State Treasurer 2010	State Treasurer	Democrat	\$100.00
11/02/2024	Mama Gwen 2024	State Senator (D-13)	Independent	\$50.00

FEDERAL CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS		
Date	Recipient	Amount
2012-09-06	Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee	\$25.00
2018-07-25	Need To Impeach	\$5.00
2019-06-16	Biden For President	\$10.00
2019-12-23	Allison Fine For Congress	\$25.00
2020-03-22	Democratic Action	\$5.00
2020-04-12	Democratic Action	\$1.00
2020-05-12	Democratic Action	\$1.00
2020-06-12	Democratic Action	\$1.00
2020-07-12	Democratic Action	\$1.00
2020-08-12	Democratic Action	\$1.00
2020-08-26	Dscc	\$5.00
2020-09-12	Democratic Action	\$1.00
2020-09-15	Dscc	\$25.00
2020-10-07	Biden For President	\$25.00
2020-10-12	Democratic Action	\$1.00
2020-10-14	Jaime Harrison For Us Senate	\$10.00

2020-10-14	ActBlue (tip)	\$1.00
2020-11-12	Democratic Action	\$1.00
2020-12-12	Democratic Action	\$1.00
2021-01-12	Democratic Action	\$1.00
2021-02-12	Democratic Action	\$1.00
2021-03-12	Democratic Action	\$1.00
2021-04-12	Democratic Action	\$1.00
2021-05-12	Democratic Action	\$1.00
2021-06-12	Democratic Action	\$1.00
2021-07-12	Democratic Action	\$1.00
2022-10-12	Warnock For Georgia	\$10.00
2022-10-16	Val Demings For Us Senate	\$10.00
2024-04-03	Stop Trump	\$10.00
2024-07-18	Democratic Election Fund	\$20.00
2024-07-18	ActBlue (tip)	\$3.00
2024-10-31	ActBlue (tip)	\$5.00
2024-10-31	Colin Allred For Senate	\$25.00
2025-05-29	ActBlue (tip)	\$4.00
2025-05-29	Murphy Mobilization Fund	\$35.00
2025-06-17	Jasmine Clark For Georgia	\$10.00
2025-06-17	ActBlue (tip)	\$2.00
2025-06-22	Jasmine For Us	\$25.00
2025-10-04	Jasmine For Us	\$20.00

On November 2, 2024 — Three Days Before Election Day — Saunders Donated \$50 To Mama Gwen 2024, The Candidate Committee Of Gwen Samuel For Connecticut State Senate District 13. "Receipt ID: C1728841 | Committee: Mama Gwen 2024 (SEEC30) | Received From: Anita Ford Saunders, Middletown CT | District: 13 | Office Sought: State Senator | Receipt Type: Itemized Contributions from Individuals | Committee Type: Candidate Committee | Transaction Date: 11/02/2024 | File to State: 01/10/2025 | Amount: \$50.00 | Election Year: 2024 | Method: Credit/Debit Card." [[SEEC eCRIS Receipt Search](#), Verified 5/04/26]

- Samuel Ran On The Independent Party Line In A Three-Way General Election Won By Incumbent Democrat Jan Hochadel With 53.7% Of The Vote To Republican Elain Cariati's 43.9% And Samuel's 2.4%.** "Incumbent Jan Hochadel defeated Elain Cariati and Gwen Samuel in the general election for Connecticut State Senate District 13 on November 5, 2024. [...] Jan Hochadel - 53.7%; Elain Cariati - 43.9%; Gwen Samuel - 2.4%." [[Ballotpedia, Connecticut State Senate District 13](#), accessed 5/8/26]
- Although Samuel Ran On The Independent Line, She Was Conservative-Aligned: She Founded And Leads The Connecticut Parents Union, A Charter School And School Choice Advocacy Group; Headlined Republican Gubernatorial Candidate Bob Stefanowski's 2022 "Parental Bill Of Rights" Rollout; And Has Publicly Opposed The Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference's Transgender-Inclusive Sports Policy.** "Samuel headlined Republican gubernatorial candidate Bob Stefanowski's 2022 'Parental Bill of Rights' rollout, which proposed: ending school mask mandates, prohibiting transgender athletes from competing in female competitions, requiring parental consent for sex education, expanding charter/magnet/technical schools, and raising the social media age from 13 to 16. [...] At the Stefanowski 2022 event, Samuel 'suggested separate competitions for transgender athletes, like Special Olympics' — opposing the CIAC's transgender-inclusive sports policy." [[CT Mirror, 9/06/22](#)]
- The Senator Saunders Donated Against — Democrat Jan Hochadel — Has Been President Of AFT Connecticut Since 2015 And Has Served On The American Federation Of Teachers National Executive As A Vice President Since 2016.** "Jan Hochadel has been the president of AFT Connecticut since 2015 and became a Connecticut state senator in 2022. [...] In addition to her state senate role, in 2016, Hochadel was elected as an AFT vice president where she sits on the organizing committee." [[Wikipedia, Jan Hochadel](#), accessed 5/8/26]

POLITICAL NEWS

Saunders' Campaign Website Said District 9 "Has Been Overlooked" And That She Is Running To Bring "Honest, New Leadership That Listens, Acts With Accountability, And Puts People First." "Why I'm Running. District 9 deserves leadership rooted in transparency, integrity, and service. For too long, our communities have been overlooked. I'm running to change that—to bring honest, new leadership that listens, acts with accountability, and puts people first." [Saunders 4 State Senate, [Accessed 5/04/26](#)]

Saunders' Housing Position Was To "Secure State Funds From The Budget Surplus To Provide Property Tax Relief For Existing Homeowners And Build New Quality Housing In The District." "Address housing affordability. Secure state funds from the budget surplus to provide property tax relief for existing homeowners and build new quality housing in the district." [Saunders 4 State Senate, [Accessed 5/04/26](#)]

Saunders' Senior-Services Position Includes "Property Tax Relief, Prescription Price Regulation, And Expanded Support Services." "Protect and increase essential services for our seniors. Including property tax relief, prescription price regulation, and expanded support services." [Saunders 4 State Senate, [Accessed 5/04/26](#)]

In A March 2, 2026 Daily Ructions Item Announcing Saunders' Bid Against Sen. Matt Lesser, The Blog Said To "Expect The Extended Debate In Middletown Over Charter Schools To Play A Role In The Campaign" Because Saunders Is Co-Chair Of The Capital Prep Middletown Planning Committee, And Predicted Her Yankee Gas Work "May Also Earn A Mention" On Utility Costs. "Public relations and communications professional Anita Ford Saunders has formed a campaign committee to seek the Democratic nomination in the state's 9th Senate District. The Middletown Democrat will face incumbent Matt Lesser at a May nominating convention and, if necessary, an August primary in the five-town district that includes part or all of Cromwell, Middletown, Newington, Rocky Hill, and Wethersfield. [...] Middletown, the largest town in the district, is home to a Democratic party thick with competing factions, providing Saunders with opportunities to win delegates in her and Lesser's hometown. [...] Expect the extended debate in Middletown over charter schools to play a role in the campaign. Saunders is the co-chair of the Capital Prep Middletown Planning Committee. Her work for Yankee Gas may also earn a mention because utility costs are part of any campaign for the state legislature in Connecticut." [Daily Ructions, [03/02/26](#)]

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

April 2026: Saunders' First Mandatory Campaign Finance Disclosure Reported \$2,275 Raised From 27 Itemized Individual Contributors For The Period February 20 To March 31, 2026, \$63.04 In Expenses (Staples Printing) Plus \$108 Reimbursed To The Candidate Personally For PO Box Rental, And \$2,211.96 Cash On Hand. "13. Balance on hand at the beginning of Reporting Period \$0.00. 14. Contributions received from Individuals (Section A and B) \$2,275.00. 18. Total Monetary Receipts \$2,275.00. 20. Expenses Paid by Committee (Section N) \$63.04. 21. Balance on hand at close of Reporting Period \$2,211.96. 27. Campaign Expenses Paid By Candidate (Section O) \$108.00. H. Public Grant Funds Received from the Citizens' Election Fund: Total of Section H — [blank]. PERIOD COVERED: 02/20/2026 thru 03/31/2026." [SEEC Form 30 — Saunders 4 State Senate, [04/04/26](#)]

- **The Single Largest Contribution On Saunders' Disclosure — \$340, The Maximum Allowed Per Person To A State Senate Candidate Committee — Came From Paul Gionfriddo Of 369 Pine St, Middletown, Listed As Retired; Gionfriddo Is The Former CEO Of Mental Health America And A Former Connecticut State Representative.** "Last Name First MI Contribution ID #: Gionfriddo Paul 0007. Residential Street Address City State Zip Code: 369 Pine St Middletown CT 06457. Principal Occupation: Retired. Name of Employer: Retired. Method of contribution: Credit/Debit Card. Date Received: 03/11/2026. Amount of Contribution: \$340.00. Aggregate Contributions: \$340.00." [SEEC Form 30 — Saunders 4 State Senate, [04/04/26](#)]
- **Saunders' Husband Leslie Saunders Of 14 Brookview La, Middletown Contributed \$300 To The Campaign On 3/17/26 And Is Listed As Retired.** "Last Name First MI Contribution ID #: Saunders Leslie 0003. Residential Street Address City State Zip Code: 14 Brookview La, Middletown CT 06457. Principal Occupation: Retired. Name of Employer: Retired. Method of contribution: Personal Check. Date Received: 03/17/2026. Amount of Contribution: \$300.00." [SEEC Form 30 — Saunders 4 State Senate, [04/04/26](#)]
- **A \$200 Contribution Came From Regina Y. Rush-Kittle Of Rocky Hill, Listed As Retired — Rush-Kittle Is The Former Connecticut Deputy Commissioner Of Emergency Services And Public Protection.** "Last Name First MI Contribution ID #: Rush-Kittle Regina Y 0004. Residential Street Address City State Zip Code: 26 Peria Dr, Rocky Hill CT 06067. Principal Occupation: Retired. Name of Employer: Retired. Method of contribution:

Credit/Debit Card. Date Received: 03/08/2026. Amount of Contribution: \$200.00." [SEEC Form 30 — Saunders 4 State Senate, [04/04/26](#)]

ISSUES

ABORTION

On July 4, 2018, Saunders Tweeted A Pro-Choice Voting Call To Action: "Attention All Women, This Is No Joke. If We Allow Our Rights To Be Stripped From Us It Will Be Our Own Fault. Please Vote. Please Stand Up For Yourself And Our Daughters." "Attention all women, this is no joke. If we allow our rights to be stripped from us it will be our own fault. Please vote. Please stand up for yourself and our daughters." [@afscomm Twitter, [07/04/18](#)]

BLACK LIVES MATTER

Saunders Publicly Critiqued The Black Lives Matter Movement As A Public Relations Strategist In 2016, Saying The Movement's Message Was "All Good" But "A Little Diluted" And That BLM Should "Take A Cue From The Traditional Organization" Like The NAACP And Urban League To Be Successful. "My concern about Black Lives Matter movement is, is it for everyone? What are the messages, the messages you get when you go to their website, to their Twitter page, to their Facebook page, are all kind of related. But one thing about the Civil Rights Movement and other movements I think that are grounded a little more grounded there was a specific and a maybe a tangible goal and a focused message. And although the messages are all in my heart and in my head correct as a public relations strategist, and I deal with this every single day, I need to have a focused message [...] but with Black Lives Matter, my concern is that the message is kind of all over the place. It's all good, but it gets a little diluted [...] You know, we should all take a cue from what has gone before us, because it was successful." [CT State Tunxis Panel, [2/17/16](#)]

Saunders Suggested The Inclusion Of LGBTQ Black People In The Black Lives Matter Movement Was A Political Liability For The Movement Within The Black Church, Asking The Audience To "Think About That. Church Ain't Necessarily Gonna Buy Into That." "[O]ne of the institutions in the civil rights movement was the black church. But how welcome will the black church be when, when they they when the Black Lives Matter Movement affirms the lives of black queer and trans folks. Think about that. Church ain't necessarily gonna buy into that." [CT State Tunxis Panel, [2/17/16](#)]

Saunders Criticized A Black Lives Matter Action At A Connecticut Forum Event On Racism, Where Activists Took A Stand With A Megaphone Inside The Hall, Saying "What Good Did That Do? It Did Nothing But Disrupt" And Criticizing The Activists For Refusing To Engage With The Panel That Wanted To "Hear" Them. "[F]ive minutes after she got through, introducing everybody on the panel, two rows in front of us, a group of people stood up, and it was they were from the Black Lives Matter movement, and they started screaming, black lives matter. Black lives matter. We're here to disrupt this, this dysfunction today, because black lives matter. [...] And then Michelle Lawrence turned around and said, turn around and talk to us. We want to hear you. But all they did was scream, Black Lives Matter. And then they were escorted out. What good did that do? It did nothing but Disrupt. And they said, We are here to disrupt, but it's like preaching to the choir." [CT State Tunxis Panel, [2/17/16](#)]

EDUCATION

CAPITAL PREP MIDDLETOWN CHARTER SCHOOL

FOUNDING & INITIAL APPROVAL (FEBRUARY-MARCH 2023)

In February 2023, Saunders Was Listed As A Founding Member Of The Proposed Capital Preparatory Middletown Charter School, A Social Justice-Oriented Public Charter School Slated To Open In August 2024 With A Possible Site At The Former Connecticut Juvenile Training School Prison Property. "MIDDLETOWN — The State Board of Education will conduct a public hearing Wednesday about an application for a social justice-oriented charter school that eventually would serve students in kindergarten through second grade and those in grades 6-12. If realized, the Capital Preparatory Middletown Charter School would have a 201-day school year and open in August 2024, according to the application. [...] Two sites are mentioned as possibilities: land between Cross Street AME Zion and Shiloh Baptist churches, and the former state-run Connecticut Juvenile Training School, which closed in 2018. It is intended to replicate schools run by a "nationally acclaimed, minority-led charter management organization that was born in Middletown," according to the 518-page application. [...] A number of well-known individuals are listed as founding members of the Middletown proposition. They include Bishop W. Vance Cotten Sr. of Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church; the Rev. Moses L. Harvill of Cross Street AME Zion Church; Wesleyan University and Middletown High School graduate Dario Highsmith, who works for the state Department of Children and Families; the Rev. William J. McKissick Jr., senior pastor for

Middletown's New Jerusalem Christian Center and Department of Corrections chaplain; Middletown Board of Education member DeLita Rose-Daniels; and Middlesex County NAACP President Anita Ford Saunders." [The Middletown Press, 02/14/23]

In March 2023, Saunders Defended The Capital Prep Application At The State Board Of Education Meeting, Pushing Back On Opponents Who Said The Public Was Not Adequately Notified, Insisting "There Were Six Noticed, In-Person Events Held Beforehand" And That "People Of The Community Did Know." "Anita Ford Saunders, one of the founding members of the proposal, said there has been "misinformation" disseminated to the community, including from those who said the public had not been given enough notification of a Feb. 15 hearing. However, Ford Saunders said, there were six noticed, in-person events held beforehand, including a virtual one in December attended by local legislators. "People of the community did know," she said." [The Middletown Press, 03/02/23]

- **Saunders Disputed Claims That State Money Would Be "Taken" From Public Schools For The Charter School: "The Money Does Not Follow The Student."** "Ford Saunders also told the board that no one at the Feb. 15 hearing was booed by proponents, as some have said. Others opposed to the school who claimed money would be "taken" from public schools for the charter school, are incorrect, she said. "The money does not follow the student." [The Middletown Press, 03/02/23]

The 2023 Capital Prep Middletown Application Listed Saunders' Husband Leslie "Les" Saunders As The Proposed Treasurer Of The Capital Prep Middletown Charter School Governing Council, Alongside Chair Yvette Highsmith Francis, Vice Chair Barbara Wade Holloman, And Secretary Linda. "b. Identify which members intend to serve on the governing council of the proposed school. [...] The following members of the founding team are expected to join the Board of Directors (Governing Council): Chair – Yvette Highsmith Francis. Vice Chair – Barbara Wade Holloman. Treasurer – Les Saunders. Secretary - Linda Miller. Members - Reverend Harvill, Bishop McKissick, DeLita Rose-Daniels, and Sana Cotten. Two members of the founding group are employees of CPS (Dr. Perry and Mr. W—)." [Capital Prep Middletown Charter Application (CT SDE), [2023](#)]

FIRST FUNDING FIGHT: \$4.75M PULLED (JUNE 2023)

In June 2023, At A Capitol Press Conference, Saunders, As New Middlesex County NAACP President, Voiced Frustration That Capital Prep Middletown Was Under Threat Of Removal From The Biennial State Budget Despite Earning "The Highest-Scoring Application" And Passing "Unanimously Through The Legislature's Appropriations Committee." "Local elected officials, school representatives, faith leaders, and families joined the Middlesex County Chapter of the NAACP and chair of the state NAACP at the State Capitol on Monday to voice frustration over Capital Prep Middletown being under threat of removal from the biennial state budget. Anita Ford Saunders, the new president of the Middlesex County NAACP, said she is disappointed by the idea the funding might not come through, as they followed every stage of the state Department of Education request for proposals approval process by completing the 518-page application, garnering huge community support at meetings and public hearings, earning the highest-scoring application, and seeing it pass unanimously through the Legislature's Appropriations Committee." [The Hartford Courant, 06/06/23]

- **Saunders Framed The Charter School Push As A Choice Issue For Black And Brown Families: "It's Not Really About The School. It Is About Black And Brown People Having An Opportunity, A Choice For Their Children."** "She also said she wanted to make it clear the effort is about choice for Middletown parents and students. "It's not really about the school. It is about Black and brown people having an opportunity, a choice for their children, just like other people choose to send their child to Mercy or choose to send their child to (another school). It doesn't cost you to go to Capital Prep, what you get from Capital Prep is a lot more. All we are asking is for the option, the choice. If your child or your family chooses not to go to Capital Prep, that's fine...We want the option. We have done every single thing in line with the process," she said." [The Hartford Courant, 06/06/23]

In June 2023, Saunders Publicly Named State Sen. Matt Lesser And State Sen. Jan Hochadel — Both Of Whom Represent Middletown — As The Lawmakers She Said Blocked Capital Prep Middletown's Funding At The "11th Hour" In A Move The Statewide And Middlesex NAACP Called "Racist." "Both the statewide NAACP and its Middlesex County chapter called the decision a 'racist,' 'back-door' and '11th hour' effort to limit educational options for Black and brown children and their families. 'Despite doing everything possible, the right way, we had meetings with legislators who could never give us a "why" [the school isn't being funded],' said Anita Ford Saunders, the president of the Middlesex County NAACP, who later added that the school was blocked by Sen. Matt Lesser and Sen. Jan Hochadel, two lawmakers who represent Middletown. 'Sometimes you really have to think it's not really about the school, it's about Black

and brown people having an opportunity — a choice,' Ford Saunders said, referring to how about 94% of children in the state's 21 charter schools are students of color." [The Connecticut Mirror, 06/08/23]

In June 2023, After Capital Prep Middletown Lost \$4.75 Million In Anticipated State Funding, Saunders Said "We've Worked Very Long To Provide Families In Middletown And Surrounding Towns An Opportunity For A Choice. We're Going To Keep Working At It." "In March, a General Assembly fiscal analyst studied both Education Cost Savings and Alliance District funding in fiscal years 2024-29, finding that Middletown schools could potentially lose as much as \$14.8 million in education funding over the first six years of the charter school's existence. Anita Ford Saunders, another founding member of Capital Prep Middletown, spoke out at several state education board meetings and budget hearings. She is also the president of the Middlesex County NAACP, which backs the school. Ford Saunders said she's very disappointed that the school wasn't funded. "We've worked very long to provide families in Middletown and surrounding towns an opportunity for a choice. We're going to keep working at it." A June 5 email from the local NAACP said founders followed every stage of the approval process "to the letter," garnered "huge" community support at meetings and public hearings, and earned the highest scoring application that was eventually approved unanimously by the Appropriations Committee." [The Middletown Press, 06/23/23]

2024 CAPITOL RALLY

In March 2024, Saunders Joined A Capitol Rally Of Charter School Advocates From Danbury And Middletown, Describing A "Two-And-A-Half Year Fight" To Open The School And Accusing State Lawmakers Of Moving "Some Chess Pieces On The Board" To Pull The Money "At The 11th Hour." "Anita Ford Saunders, a founding member of Capital Preparatory Charter School, described a two-and-a-half year fight to get the school open in Middletown. The charter school was unanimously approved by the State Board of Education, she said. But the funding was pulled in the "11th hour," she said. "The state Board of Education is the people who are supposed to say, 'Is this a go or not?' But at the 11th hour literally, just a couple of people moved some chess pieces on the board, changed the game and took some money out of the budget. We asked why. They didn't give us a why ... They go down the hall. They say, 'Sure we're going to get you an appointment.' And we don't get an appointment," Ford Saunders said." [The News-Times (Danbury), 03/27/24]

2025 'WEAPONIZING' CHARGE & OCTOBER FUNDING DENIAL

In May 2025, Saunders Told The State Board Of Education That State Agencies Were "Weaponizing" Connecticut Law To "Keep Marginalized Communities And Children From Thriving," Arguing The Department Of Education "Skipped Over The School That Received The Highest Scores To Grant The Money To The School Who Came In Second And Subsequently Never Opened." "Anita Ford Saunders, the president of the Middlesex County NAACP, added during a public comment period at the board meeting Wednesday that state agencies were "weaponizing" the law to "keep marginalized communities and children from thriving." "The law says the (state Department of Education) is supposed to choose what charter school is to receive funding based on its scores. You skipped over the school that received the highest scores to grant the money to the school who came in second and subsequently never opened," Saunders said. Both Perry and Saunders were referring to language in Connecticut law which says "if in any fiscal year, more than one new state or local charter school is approved and is awaiting funding the State Board of Education shall determine which school is funded first based on a consideration of the following factors in order of importance as follows: (1) The quality of the proposed program as measured against the criteria required in the charter school application process (2) whether the applicant has a demonstrated record of academic success by students, (3) whether the school is located in a school district with a demonstrated need for student improvement, and (4) whether the applicant has plans concerning the preparedness of facilities, staffing and outreach to students."" [The Connecticut Mirror, 05/07/25]

In October 2025, Saunders, Now Identified As Co-Chair Of The Capital Prep Middletown Planning Committee, Told The State Board Of Education "We're Not Going To Stop Until We Get This School," Calling The Continued Denial Of Capital Prep Middletown's Opening "A Shame And A Crime." "The packed meeting room at North Haven High School and the passionate appeals in favor of the charter school suggested the Oct. 8 vote would not put an end to efforts to open up the school. "We're not going to stop until we get this school," said Anita Ford Saunders, co-chair of the Capital Prep Middletown Planning Committee, at the meeting. Denying the opportunity to open Capital Prep Middletown was a "shame and it's a crime," she said. The state Board of Education gave its initial approval to the Capital Preparatory Middletown Charter School in 2023. However, the school still has not received funding in the state budget and has thus been unable to open." [The News-Times (Danbury), 10/10/25]

At The October 8, 2025 State Board Of Education Meeting At North Haven High School, Saunders Argued The State Was Ignoring Statistics Showing Middletown Students Of Color Lagged Behind: "Give Students Of Color

The Choice They Deserve. Middletown Is Very Different — We Are Not Bridgeport Or Waterbury Or Hartford Where We Have A Lot Of Options. We Have The Neighborhood Public Schools." Anita Ford Saunders, co-chair of the Capital Prep Middletown Planning Committee, said at this week's meeting that students of color lagged behind white students in academic scores and college and career readiness across the state of Connecticut. "When folks are saying that Middletown doesn't need Capital Prep — what are you looking at? You're not looking at the statistics," she said. "Give students of color the choice they deserve. Middletown is very different — we are not Bridgeport or Waterbury or Hartford where we have a lot of options. We have the neighborhood public schools." Saunders praised Capital Preparatory Schools, saying an overwhelming majority of Capital Prep Harbor School students are considered college or career ready, compared to a much lower proportion statewide." [The Hartford Courant, 10/14/25]

- **Saunders Disputed Local Officials' Claim That A Charter School Would Take Money From Middletown Public Schools, Saying Connecticut Funds Districts Based On Pupils Who Attend "Choice" Schools And That Charters Face "Stricter Scrutiny" Than Traditional Schools.** "Ford Saunders, of the Capital Prep Middletown Planning Committee, took issue with Downer's and Loomis-Davern's claims. She said because of the way Connecticut funds school districts, state support for charter schools would not take money away from the public schools, which receive funding for pupils who attend "choice" schools like charter and magnet schools. She said Capital Prep students are chosen through a lottery system, which gives no indication of whether a student is an English-language learner or has a disability. She also said that charter schools are subject to stricter scrutiny than public schools, including a regular review of their operations and finances by the state Department of Education. In response to concerns about teachers leaving, she said that teachers would have the choice to work wherever they felt was best." [The Hartford Courant, 10/14/25]

At The October 8, 2025 Connecticut State Board Of Education Special Meeting At North Haven High School, Saunders Compared Connecticut's Public Education System To South African Apartheid, Telling The Board That Opponents Of Capital Prep Middletown Were "Maybe Using South Africa As A Model For Education, Helping To Keep Educational Apartheid Alive And Well In Middletown." "[I]n Middletown, first of all, in this state of Connecticut, blacks scored on an average of 39 points less than whites, while Latinos averaged 162 points less. Imagine the difference in collegiate opportunities white students have over black and Latin students in the state of Connecticut [...] So what folks are saying That Middletown doesn't need capital prep. What are you looking at? You're not looking at the statistics. Maybe you're using South Africa as a model for education, helping to keep educational apartheid alive and well in Middletown, give students of color the choice they deserve." [CT State Department of Education, State Board of Education Special Meeting, [10/08/25](#)]

2026 TESTIMONY

On February 17, 2026, Eleven Days Before Saunders Formally Signed Her Senate Campaign Filings, Saunders Testified Before The Connecticut General Assembly's Appropriations Committee As Co-Chair Of The Capital Prep Middletown Planning Committee, Telling Lawmakers Capital Prep Was Approved In 2023, Received "The Highest Score" Of Charter Applications, And Should Be Funded Per CT General Statutes § 10-66ee(k). "Testimony February 17, 2026 3:00pm. My name is Anita Ford Saunders. I live Middletown, CT and I am Co-Chair of the Capital Prep Middletown Planning Committee. I am here to speak to the ongoing challenge of granting funding to an already approved school. Capital Prep Middletown was approved in 2023. It received the highest score of public charter school applications. This is important because despite its top score and approval and Connecticut General Statutes that explain the funding process. Charter School Funding Law - § 10-66ee (k). Charter school funding. which says "If any fiscal year, more than one new state or local charter school is approved ... and is awaiting funding, the school with the highest score should be funded." [...] Middletown is an Alliance District. That means our school system has not met the state's accountability standards. A school system is required to be accountable for the educational progress of their students. Capital Prep Middletown would be a solution." [CT General Assembly, HB-05032 Testimony, [02/17/26](#)]

- **In Her Capital Prep Testimony, Saunders Asserted That Public Charter Schools "Do Not Take Money Away From Any Student Attending A Neighborhood Public School" And That "That Would Be Against The Law".** "Charter schools are public schools and are part of the public education system. They provide families with choice. And the existence of a public charter school in a city DOES NOT take money away from any student attending a neighborhood public school. That would be against the law. [...] We are asking lawmakers to honor the approval already granted. We ask legislators – and the State Board of Education/State Department of Education – to LISTEN to the community, to parents and try to imagine the children, our students who are just asking for a chance and a choice. [...] I am asking you to do what you can to allow Capital prep Middletown to open and serve the entire community. Please don't turn your back on us again." [CT General Assembly, HB-05032 Testimony, [02/17/26](#)]

- **In The Same Testimony, Saunders Cited "Capital Prep Harbor's Success In Bridgeport" As Demonstrating The Charter Model "Works" And Noted That "Governor Lamont Even Has A Capital Prep Graduate Working In His Office."** "And the Capital Prep Model of a social justice curriculum has been successful. Governor Lamont even has a Capital Prep graduate working in his office. Capital Prep Harbor's success in Bridgeport demonstrates that this model works. It is the number one school in the state for sending students to college. Families in Middletown deserve the right to choose the educational setting that best supports their child's success." [CT General Assembly, HB-05032 Testimony, [02/17/26](#)]

IMPACT ON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A General Assembly Fiscal Analyst Studied Middletown's Education Cost Sharing And Alliance District Funding Across Fiscal Years 2024-2029 And Found That Middletown Public Schools Could Lose As Much As \$14.8 Million In Education Funding Over The First Six Years Of Capital Prep Middletown's Existence — A Direct Contradiction To Saunders' Claim That "The Money Does Not Follow The Student." "In March, a General Assembly fiscal analyst studied both Education Cost Savings [sic] and Alliance District funding in fiscal years 2024-29, finding that Middletown schools could potentially lose as much as \$14.8 million in education funding over the first six years of the charter school's existence." [The Middletown Press, [6/23/23](#)]

The School + State Finance Project, A Non-Partisan Connecticut Education Finance Research Organization, Concluded In A Published Brief That "Some Towns May Receive Less ECS Funding Due To The Opening Of A State Charter School Than They Otherwise Would Have Received Had The School Not Opened." "Some towns may receive less ECS funding due to the opening of a state charter school than they otherwise would have received had the school not opened. When a new state charter school opens in a district, the host district is likely to experience a reduction in Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funding when compared to not having the charter school in operation. This is the result of a reduction in the ECS formula's resident student count for the local district, as well as changes in student need demographics due to the establishment of the charter school, which impact town ECS grant amounts." [School + State Finance Project, Potential Financial Impacts of State Charter Schools on Local Public School Districts, [Published 6/13/24, updated 7/15/25](#)]

The School + State Finance Project Brief Explicitly Notes That Alliance Districts Are Only "Partially Shielded" — They Cannot Receive Less Than Their Prior-Year ECS Total Or Their FY 2017 Amount, But They Can Still Receive Less Than They Otherwise Would Have Received Without The Charter School Operating, Particularly As The State's ECS Phase-In Concludes In FY 2026. "Alliance Districts are partially shielded from the impact of charter schools on ECS funding as these districts statutorily cannot receive less in ECS funding than they received in either the prior year or for FY 2017. As a result, decreases in student counts will not result in funding decreases compared to the prior year or FY 2017 amounts. [Footnote B:] The state ECS grant is expected to fully phased-in for towns that are considered underfunded by FY 2026. At that time, districts experiencing reductions in resident student counts will experience corresponding reductions in state ECS support." [School + State Finance Project, Potential Financial Impacts of State Charter Schools on Local Public School Districts, [Published 6/13/24, updated 7/15/25](#)]

COMMUNITY OPPOSITION

In An April 21, 2023 Letter To Lawmakers, The Middletown Racial Justice Coalition — A Local Organization Working On Issues Affecting Black And Brown Families In Middletown, The Same Constituency Saunders Claims Capital Prep Will Serve — Urged The Legislature Not To Fund Capital Prep Middletown, Arguing The Money Should Be Used To Improve Existing Public Schools. "While we understand, agree, and empathize with the reasons people of color would want to remove their children from our current school systems, the MRJC firmly believes that the answer is to continue to put pressure on these systems to demand they educate and treat our children with the respect they deserve. [...] We need to be demanding more from our public schools! Our communities need funding for anti-racist teaching, hiring, and curriculum development. Capital Prep Middletown will not eradicate the issues of racism for all, or even most, of our children of color in Middletown." [CT Mirror (quoting Middletown Racial Justice Coalition letter), [6/08/23](#)]

AFT Connecticut, The State's Largest Affiliate Of The American Federation Of Teachers, Has Publicly Argued That The "Money Follows The Child" Concept Is "Severely Flawed" Because The Departure Of Even One Student Creates A Ripple Effect That Affects The Remaining Public School Students; AFT-CT Calculated That On Average, Each Student Leaving Public School For A Charter School Took \$14,122 In Funds With Them — The Per-Pupil Spending Average At The Time. "ConnCAN has regularly proposed a severely flawed concept called 'money follows the child.' [...] While this concept might sound logical at first, the departure of even one student creates a ripple

effect in the school they are leaving. The financial impact of money 'following the child' to a charter school affects the remaining public school students. When multiple students leave a public school, taking money that had been budgeted for their education with them, the effects can shake an entire school's foundations. On average, each student leaving their public school for a charter school would take an average of \$14,122 in funds with them." [AFT Connecticut, The Truth About Charter Schools, [Accessed 5/8/26](#)]

The Connecticut Education Association, The State's Largest Teachers' Union, Has Repeatedly Urged The State Board Of Education To Reject Charter School Expansion On Grounds That It Drains "Critical Funds Away From Neighborhood Public Schools And Causing Irreparable Harm To The State's Poorest School Districts." "The Connecticut Education Association is urging the State Board of Education (SBOE) to put students ahead of politics and reject charter school expansion efforts that are draining critical funds away from neighborhood public schools and causing irreparable harm to the state's poorest school districts." [Connecticut Education Association, State Board of Education Urged to Reject Costly Charter School Expansion, [2/14/18](#)]

RACISM IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In August 2024, Saunders Said Racist Incidents In Connecticut Schools Constituted An "Epidemic" Beyond Her "Wildest Imaginations" And Argued Leaders Should Treat It "With The Same Urgency As A Public Health Crisis." "Activists and community leaders say a complete picture paints a very different reality — one that speaks to a systemic pattern of racial hostilities in Connecticut schools that must be confronted head-on. "This is beyond my wildest imaginations of how this has become an epidemic in the state of Connecticut," Middlesex County NAACP President Anita Ford Saunders said. In Saunders' eyes, leaders should treat racism in schools with the same urgency as a public health crisis. "(If) you have an outbreak ... and you've got one in Colchester, and you've got one in Middletown, and you've got one in East Haddam, and you've got one in Cromwell and you've got one in Glastonbury — wouldn't you say 'Hey, we got a problem here,' and do something about it?" Saunders said." [The Hartford Courant, 08/04/24]

- **Saunders Said Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont Needed To "Pay Attention" Because She Knew "Of Two Families Who Are Leaving This State — Leaving His State — Because Of Racism."** "Saunders emphasized that the issue is bigger than any one school or town — "It's Connecticut." "The governor needs to pay attention to what's happening in his state," Saunders said. "I know of two families who are leaving this state — leaving his state — because of racism. He needs to pay attention (and) the Department of Education needs to look at the state and start finding solutions to this epidemic." "This is not like a snowbird going to Florida. This is, 'I'm packing up my family and I'm going,'" Saunders said. "It's a sad state of affairs. It doesn't have to (be) this way. We can do better. Connecticut can do better."" [The Hartford Courant, 08/04/24]
- **Reflecting On East Haddam, Saunders Said Some Residents Would Only Speak Anonymously For Fear Of Retaliation, Asking: "Is This Connecticut Or Is This Mississippi?"**. "This summer, Saunders has worked closely with the community in East Haddam to address the recent incidents of alleged racism in the town's middle school. In conversations with residents, Saunders said it became clear to her that the recent behavior is part of a larger history of "systemic racism that has gone on in the school system for decades." "It's not everyone, but it is so deeply ingrained," Saunders said. "When you have someone who is willing to talk to you, but only if they can remain anonymous because they're afraid of retaliation of what's going to happen to them in the community (or) how they'll be ostracized — (you think) is this Connecticut or is this Mississippi?" "That's crazy," Saunders said." [The Hartford Courant, 08/04/24]
- **Saunders Argued Connecticut Hate Crime Laws Need Stronger Enforcement, Including Holding Parents Of Juvenile Perpetrators Accountable: "When It Involves A Juvenile, It Needs To Involve The Parents."** ""There needs to be consequences," Saunders said. "We have hate crime laws (but) it's very difficult to prosecute hate crimes," Saunders said. "When it involves a juvenile, it needs to involve the parents. ... People have to be accountable and we as citizens need to be able to speak out and hopefully have the courage to speak out."" [The Hartford Courant, 08/04/24]

GUNS

On Dec. 15, 2012 (One Day After The Sandy Hook School Shooting In Newtown, CT), Saunders Tweeted That She "Got Sick To My Stomach" And Hoped Lawmakers Would "Get Serious About Gun Control." "Deb This is crazy! It's beyond sad. I got sick to my stomach. Maybe now, maybe...they'll get serious about gun control. Take care," [@afscomm Twitter, [12/15/12](#)]

On Dec. 23, 2012 (Nine Days After Sandy Hook), Saunders Reported Seeing A Crowd "40 Deep" Lined Up Outside Hoffman's Gun Center In Newington Connecticut Waiting For The Store To Open On A Sunday Morning, And Tweeted Directly At CNN's Don Lemon About It. "On way to church this Sunday morning saw crowd 40 deep waiting for Hoffman gun store to open. How did we get to this??!! / @donlemoncnn Hoffman Guns in CT, waiting line 40 deep this Sunday morning / @DonLemonCNN @davidsirota In CT, Hoffman Gun Store, folks were lined up waiting for the store to open this Sun AM. Yr profile fit the crowd." [@afscomm Twitter, [12/23/12](#)]

On Dec. 31, 2012, Saunders Promoted A Petition To "Confirm A Director Of The Bureau Of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, And Explosives Immediately" — A Reference To The Senate's Long-Standing Refusal To Confirm An ATF Director. "Confirm a director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives immediately <http://t.co/rN05DW1Q> @signon." [@afscomm Twitter, [12/31/12](#)]

On Feb. 28, 2018 (Two Weeks After The Parkland Shooting), Saunders Tweeted Encouragement To The Parkland Student Movement With The Hashtag "#StopNRA." "Stay focused young people. U CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE #StopNRA." [@afscomm Twitter, [02/28/18](#)]

HEALTH CARE

SINGLE-PAYER

Saunders, Then The Urban League Of Greater Hartford's Director Of Development And Public Relations, Said The League "Never Has Endorsed" A Canada-Style Single-Payer Health Care System Despite Being Listed As A Member Of A Coalition Promoting It; She Cited The League's Insurance Industry Ties. "The Urban League of Greater Hartford, identified as a member of the coalition, was surprised to hear itself described as supporting a Canada-style system. Anita Ford Saunders, the league's director of development and public relations, said the league never has endorsed a single-payer option and does not now. The group, which has financial and other ties to the insurance industry, should not have been included in a written statement issued by coalition organizers, she said. [...] In addition to corporate contributions it gets from the insurance industry, the league has seats on its board filled by executives from Allstate, CIGNA Corp., Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Co., Travelers, the Phoenix Home Life Mutual Insurance Co., Aetna Life & Casualty Co. and ITT Hartford Insurance Group. That led important benefactors to call the urban league to ask what was going on, Saunders said." [Hartford Courant, 10/02/93]

- **Saunders Said The Urban League Would "Have To Withdraw From The Coalition" If The Charter Statement Endorsed A Single-Payer System And Said No Urban League Representative Was Empowered "To Endorse Something Like That ... Without First Going To The Board Of Directors."** "She traced the confusion to 1989, when someone who no longer is with the urban league signed a charter resolution Saunders described as a broadly written statement calling for universal and comprehensive health care. Yet a review of the charter resolution, also signed by other members now critical of the coalition, shows it contains more than a hint of an anti-insurance stance. A copy, provided by the citizens action group, compares health care in the United States unfavorably with that of Canada, where the provinces pay doctors and hospitals directly. The group's stated goal was "to win a universal, comprehensive, single-payer state system." Saunders said that if the charter statement endorses a single-payer system, "We will have to withdraw from the coalition." Since those early days, the league has not been involved in coalition activities and has never backed a specific political reform plan. No representative of the urban league is empowered "to endorse something like that ... without first going to the board of directors.'" [Hartford Courant, 10/02/93]

MIDDLESEX

On December 5, 2022, As Incoming Middlesex County NAACP President, Saunders Read A Letter At A Middletown Common Council Meeting Alleging A "Severe Inconsistency" In Discipline Between Mayor Ben Florsheim's Fired White Finance Director (Allegedly Probed For A Drug Related Incident At City Hall) And His Former Latina Chief Of Staff Alice Diaz, Who Was Terminated After A DUI Arrest. "MIDDLETOWN — A police investigation into a complaint that a city director was allegedly using illicit drugs in his office at City Hall some two months ago prompted one woman to address municipal leaders about what she called a "severe inconsistency" in discipline between two employees. The issue was brought to light Dec. 5, when incoming Middlesex County NAACP President Anita Ford Saunders read a letter at the Common Council meeting, that referenced, but did not name, Middletown Finance Department Director Carl Erlacher. She compared the termination of Mayor Ben Florsheim's former chief of staff Alice Diaz, who was arrested for driving under the influence and a related charge in connection with a car accident in Rocky Hill

Oct. 28, to the reported drug-related incident at City Hall. [...] Saunders pointed out there was a "severe inconsistency regarding punishment. It is especially egregious if the individual asked to leave was a person of color, and the individual allowed to stay was white." [The Middletown Press, 12/28/22]

- **Saunders Wrote That "The Systems And Power Structures Of Yesterday ... Nepotism, Cronyism, Covert And Overt Racism Must Stop. Their Time Is Gone. Only You And This Council Can Hold People Accountable, With Consistency."** "The systems and power structures of yesterday...nepotism, cronyism, covert and overt racism must stop," Saunders wrote. "Their time is gone. Only you and this council can hold people accountable, with consistency. Keeping equity and integrity at the core of our conversations, are just the starting points to dismantling the systems that perpetuate nepotism, cronyism, covert and overt racism and the power structures he wrote about so convincingly." Saunders "implored" the mayor to take immediate action "regarding the imbalance of punishment levied on one person ... and not the other. Look at the 'systems and power structures' within the city of Middletown that have set up double standards that for decades have negatively affected people of color." [The Middletown Press, 12/28/22]
- **Mayor Florsheim Pushed Back, Saying While Saunders Was "Genuine" In Her Concern She Was Relying On "Intentionally Inaccurate And Misleading" Information And That He Believed "Ms. Ford Saunders Was Misled" About The Director's Personal Medical Information.** "Florsheim said that, although Saunders is "genuine in her desire to bring forth concern about the consistency of standards towards employees," she is relying on "intentionally inaccurate and misleading" information, "that, if true, would certainly be cause for alarm." The mayor added that he is "disappointed, angry, and heartbroken by the circumstances that led here, I am nevertheless thankful for the opportunity to address some of these inaccuracies." [...] The mayor said he's confident with how city officials handled the matter, however, "it is extremely regrettable that an employee's personal medical information has been released without authorization and used to mislead people, as I believe Ms. Ford Saunders was misled." [The Middletown Press, 12/28/22]

In September 2024, Saunders Defended Recently Terminated Middletown Schools DEI Director Jada Waters As A "Champion" For Students Of Color, Telling The School Board The District "Has A History Of Discrimination, Of Dismissing Black And Brown People For Questionable Reasons." "A number of parents and community members spoke about the matter at the recent Board of Education meeting, many of whom called Waters a "champion." Middlesex NAACP President Anita Ford Saunders said she has heard from teachers and students about the positive impact Waters had. "We are actually having conversations and we are listening to each other," Ford Saunders said one teacher told her. She said she believes the district "has a history of discrimination, of dismissing Black and brown people for questionable reasons, for not promoting deserving Black and brown people who have rightfully earned promotions, but have had to stay in their place." [...] Ford Saunders referenced a recent NAACP Great Debate between Howard and Yale University students. Last year, 52 local students attended the event, she added. "Because we had a champion who was focused on Black and brown students," she said. "That was part of her job." [The Middletown Press, 09/20/24]

POLICE

Saunders Said After George Floyd's 2020 Killing, "It's Going To Take More Than People Of Color To Move This. It's Going To Take Our Allies To Help With This." "Ever since George Floyd was killed in May 2020, Saunders said, many people wonder what actions they can take toward the cause. "We have to teach people to open the door, and say, 'right now, guilt isn't doing you any good. It's going to take more than people of color to move this," Saunders said. "It's going to take our allies to help with this." [The Middletown Press, 01/14/22]

On May 12, 2020 (Three Months Before George Floyd's Killing), Saunders Tweeted About Letting Her Black Son Go For A Run In The Wake Of The Ahmaud Arbery Killing: "My Son Just Went For A Run. I Shouldn't Be Afraid, But I Am." "My son just went for a run. I shouldn't be afraid, but I am." [afscomm Twitter, [05/12/20](#)]

On June 1, 2020 (One Week After George Floyd's Killing), Saunders Replied To NBC's Sheinelle Jones: "As The Mother Of Two Black Sons, There Are So Many More Years Of Worry To Go. It Beats Up Your Soul." "@3rdHourTODAY @SheinelleJones Thanks, Soror for your honest thoughts. As the mother of two Black sons, there are so many more years of worry to go. It beats up your soul." [afscomm Twitter, [06/01/20](#)]

VOTING RIGHTS

Saunders Said America Is "Regressing" On Voting And Civil Rights And That "We Cannot Become Complacent" Because "The America My Parents And Their Peers Fought And Died For — What My Ancestors Died For, Is Regressing." "I learned about the struggle from my parents because they lived it. They taught me all sides of the 'why,'" Saunders said, adding that, these days, the momentum for change has waned. "We're regressing when it comes to voting rights. We're regressing when it comes to civil rights, human rights. What happened in the '60s, it took a lot of work — a lot of people died," she said. "We cannot become complacent," she added. "The America my parents and their peers fought and died for — what my ancestors died for, is regressing." [The Middletown Press, 01/14/22]