CENTRAL NAUGATUCK VALLEY REGIONAL ACTION COUNCIL

Public Health Committee
Room 1 D, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

February 6, 2009

Honorable Senator Jonathan Harris, Committee Chair

Honorable Representative Elizabeth Ritter, Committee Chair

Members of the Public Health Committee

Re: Raised Bill 6262
An Act Concerning Regional Action Councils (RACs)

Dear Mr. Chairman, Madam Chairwoman, Members of the Public Health Committee:

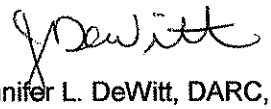
My name is Jennifer DeWitt, and I am the Executive Director of the Central Naugatuck Valley Regional Action Council (CNVRAC). Attached you will find letters of support and personal testimonies, requesting that you **oppose** Raised Bill 6262, which would establish 5 Regional Action Councils for substance abuse prevention & treatment planning.

These letters have been gathered by passionate advocates from the CNVRAC community. The CNVRAC supports substance abuse prevention services for *twelve* towns of CT. If our structure were to change as Raised Bill 6262 proposes, so would our ability to maintain local level relationships, such as the ones you now have proof of in this packet.

I urge you to strongly consider the current structure of the RACs, and to see first hand, the value of services- needs assessment, planning, program development, technical assistance, data collection & priority setting, capacity building... and that you deem these services to be most efficiently delivered in our current format. Fourteen sub-regional action councils, where local-level needs and grassroots efforts can be achieved; versus 5 "super RACs" where relationships will be lost, service delivery will be compromised, substance abuse prevention efforts will be injured.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this very important Bill.

Sincerely,



Jennifer L. DeWitt, DARC, CPP-R
Executive Director, CNVRAC

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PHONE: (203) 578-4044 • FAX: (203) 756-6032
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FAMILY
INTERVENTION
CENTER *"Promoting wellness through education, intervention and treatment"*

1875 Thomaston Avenue, Waterbury, CT 06704 (203) 753-2153 Fax (203) 756-6032 e-mail: jfutschik.FIC@sbcglobal.net

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Re: Raised Bill 6262
An Act Concerning Regional Action Councils (RACs)

Dear Mr. Chairman, Madam Chairwoman, Members of the Public Health Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is Joseph Futschik, and I am the President of the Family Intervention Center, a substance abuse and mental health treatment provider for the Waterbury area. I am writing this testimony in **opposition** of Raised Bill 6262 which would establish 5 Regional Action Councils for substance abuse prevention & treatment planning.

We have been working with the Regional Action Council since its inception many years ago and more recently have taken on the responsibility of being the fiduciary. Prevention is vitally important to our citizens in terms of helping people become education and become pro active in making healthy choices which ultimately saves money with treatment. We have witnessed an insurgence in the region coming together to promote healthy behaviors and cooperating to better serve our citizens.

We strongly encourage you to examine all aspects of this funding dilemma in order to best serve our citizens. I thank you for your willingness to consider these ideas.

Yours truly,

Joseph Futschik, LCSW, LADC
President

JEF/jf

February 2, 2009

Dear Senator Kane and Representatives Miner and Williams:

I have been asked to forward the letter below regarding drug and alcohol abuse prevention and affected family, individual, group assistance programs. I am glad to send this request to continue these programs because I have seen and heard how they are helping on a local Woodbury/Bethlehem town level. Just so long as we have drug and alcohol addiction and availability to our young population, we will need the type of programs the CNVRAC has helped us put in place and guide their effectiveness. I know you have a huge deficit crisis to deal with and you MUST make decisions where to cut expenses. Please, weigh the value of these programs against others. Good luck to all of you with the chore in front of you.

Over the past years you have most generously asked at the local level, "What can I do for you?" Well, today, CNVRAC and the thirteen other Regional Action Councils (RACs) across the state need your help. I am addressing the legislation from DMHAS that was raised by the Public Health Committee on 1/23/09, **An Act Concerning Regional Action Councils** which would result in the dissolution of 14 grassroots entities to 5 regional offices. This is a poor alternative to grassroots prevention that's been successfully ongoing in Connecticut for about 18 years.

This measure is NOT cost neutral as DMHAS claims. It could, in fact, cost the state 100's of thousands of dollars as the RACs Drug Free Communities funding would be in jeopardy. Presently, 10 of the 14 RACs are Drug Free Communities generally receiving $100,000 per year for up to ten years; and a number of the RACs also are recipients of SAMHSA Mentoring Grants of $75,000 per year. The purpose of these mentoring grants is to provide funding to existing DFC grantees (mentors) to support development and/or expansion of new community coalitions (mentees) that are focused on substance abuse prevention.

DMHAS has said that what we do is planning. The RACs do so much more than planning. The partnerships we all have grown through the years are testament to the prevention work that's been accomplished and respected within our communities. Our outreach, our partnerships built up over the past 20 years would be greatly put at risk if we were to lose our grassroots initiatives.
In a phone conversation held with Tom DeLoe, Team Leader for SAMHSA's Drug Free Communities here in Connecticut, he told Mirelle Freedman, RAC Director for the Greater Hartford area that the DFC programs are very impressed with Connecticut's Regional Action Council system. That is why, a small state such as CT, has **10 of its 14 RACs designated DFC grantees.**

On behalf of the 14 RAC Executive Directors of the Connecticut Prevention network, I am asking that you share their plight with your legislative colleagues who are serving on the Public Health Committee, and *not* allow this proposal to move forward.

Regards,

pdh

Paul D Hinckley
First Selectman
Woodbury, CT 06798
Tel: 203-263-2141
Fax: 203-263-4755
Mobile: 860-203-8427
e-mail: wdbysel@woodburyct.org

February 5, 2009

Dear Representative Conroy:

Over the past years you have most generously asked at the local level, "What can I do for you?" Well, today, CNVRAC and the thirteen other Regional Action Councils (RACs) across the state need your help. I am addressing the legislation from DMHAS that was raised by the Public Health Committee on 1/23/09, **An Act Concerning Regional Action Councils** which would result in the dissolution of 14 grassroots entities to 5 regional offices. This is a poor alternative to grassroots prevention that's been successfully ongoing in Connecticut for about 18 years.

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On behalf of the 14 RAC Executive Directors of the Connecticut Prevention network, I am asking that you share our plight with your legislative colleagues who are serving on the Public Health Committee, and *not* allow this proposal to move forward.

Please call me with any questions regarding this most important issue. I am most grateful for your strong support of the CNVRAC.

With best wishes,

Jeremy C. Rodorigo

Jeremy C. Rodorigo

EMS Director, Beacon Hose Company #1

*A*dvocates for *S*ubstance *A*buse *P*revention

P.O. Box 369

Woodbury, CT 06798

Dear Senator/Representative

I feel compelled to write to you concerning Bill #6262 **An Act Concerning Regional Action Councils** which would result in the dissolution of 14 grassroots entities to 5 regional offices. This is a poor alternative to grassroots prevention that's been successfully ongoing in Connecticut for about 18 years.

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I ask that you PLEASE contact each of the RAC Directors and discuss their role in keeping our communities safe, before you vote on this important bill. I have attached a list of the directors for your convenience.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

Kimberly Gallo
Interim Principal
Nonnewaug High School

NONNEWAUG HIGH SCHOOL
5 Minortown Road • Woodbury, Connecticut 06798 • (203) 263-2186

Kimberly Gallo, Interim Principal
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Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

Karen Prince

Karen Prince
Guidance Counselor
Nonnewaug High School

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Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

Dr. Christopher Quirk
Director of Special Services
Regional School District 14

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Lisa Gagain

Lisa Gagain
School Psychologist
Nonnewaug High School

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Susan Rossner

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Guidance Counselor
Nonnewaug High School

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Tara Rickart
Guidance Counselor
Nonnewaug High School

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Bonnie Westerberg

Bonnie Westerberg
Nurse
Nonnewaug High School

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Sharon Gomes
Social Worker
Nonnewaug High School