

Legislative Testimony

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Testimony of:

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CASAC, Board President**

Raised Bill No. 6262 An Act Regarding Regional Action Councils

Good morning, Senator **Harris**, and distinguished members of the **Public Health Committee**. My name is Waldemar Gracia, Board President of Capital Area Substance Abuse Council (**CASAC**), and I am here to support the continuation of the Regional Action Councils (**RAC**).

I am here to present in great detail the nature of the services provided by **CASAC** and its importance for the communities of the 16 cities and towns served. Established by the Connecticut State Legislature in 1990, **CASAC** is a private/public partnership comprised of community leaders and citizens who develop and carry out strategies to reduce alcohol, tobacco, other drug use and risky behaviors in our communities. **CASAC** is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization funded in part by the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration other grants and private donations.

However, I am here to speak on behalf of hundreds of young individuals (middle school/high school students) that have benefited from **CASAC** co-sponsored activities with the Local Prevention Councils (**LPC**) of the 16 cities and towns of north central Connecticut.

To give you one example, **CASAC** has been promoting "Soy Latina, Soy Unica" (I am Latina, I am Unique) annual event for the past five years. This event targets the most vulnerable Latino young females from Hartford inner city. This is a culturally specific event geared to fulfill the need among Latinos who receive nothing that may be considered as culturally relevant for the them with a focus on prevention. Specifically, ¡Soy Unica! ¡Soy Latina! is designed to help Latinas age 9 to 14, their mothers, and other caregivers build self-esteem, mental health, decision-making skills, and assertiveness to prevent the abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs. The ¡Soy Unica! ¡Soy Latina! project encourages cultural pride by emphasizing the strengths inherent in the Hispanic culture.

It has been said that "**An Once of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Cure**". I think that is precisely why we need to continue *grassroots* programs that are having an impact in the life of many adolescents in Connecticut.

Bill No. 6262 before you today, which seeks to restructure the Regional Action Councils from 14 councils to 5 regional territories, would be a disservice to the populations served now on an exceedingly local level.