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March 6, 2009

Good Afternoon Senator Harris, Representative Ritter and Members of the Public Health Committee:

Re: SB 847, AA IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS  
CONCERNING PUBLIC HEALTH, Section 58(d)

Good Afternoon Senator Harris, Representative Ritter and Members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Michele Devine; I am the Executive Director of Southeastern CT Regional Action Council serving 20 towns and cities in our state.

In these economic times, we realize that we all have to make difficult choices, however in Senate Bill 847 the reduction of state funding to the RACs has a much larger impact than it would seem on the surface. The Regional Action Councils utilize state funds to leverage and match additional federal and local funding. In the past four years, we have collectively enhanced prevention services in the state by obtaining \$6.5 million in federal and over \$8 million in local dollars. These dollars will not be available to us if we do not have the state dollars to leverage or match them.

These dollars directly impact the communities you serve because we have been able to invest in local prevention activities. I ask you to remember your return on investment is for every state dollar you allocate to RACs we bring in over \$4 in other funds including federal and local. We need the state dollars to match these federal dollars as federal substance abuse block grant dollars can't be used to match additional federal dollars. Please do not break a system that is efficient, effective, and beneficial to our communities and the state.

The Governor's proposed budget has eliminated the RAC line item and other state funds in the DMHAS budget of approximately \$600,000 and transfers to DMHAS \$600,000 from the Pre-trial Alcohol Substance Abuse Account for Regional Action Councils.

However, previously in the past several years, \$500,000 has also been transferred from the Pre-trial Account to the RACs. This transfer is not included in the Governor's budget. However, Section 58(d) of SB 847 does transfer \$500,000 to DMHAS from the Pre-trial Account for "prevention programs, including but not limited to, tobacco cessation programs and substance abuse disorder education programs." These are the types of prevention programs that the Regional Action Councils implement.

We ask that you specifically state that these funds will be used for RACs so that the local prevention infrastructure will be flat funded for the next two years and not be reduced by almost 50%. This will not require any addition to the bottom line of the Governor's proposed budget.

Please remember that decreasing state funding to the RACs will impact any additional funding that the RACs leverage for the state. Even flat funding will allow the RACs to continue to leverage federal funding and not make a difficult financial situation much worse for our communities.

Please remember that RACs are a good investment of State dollars.

Respectfully Submitted,  
*Michele Devine*