

**Testimony for Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Health and Hospitals
On the DMHAS Budget
As proposed in the Governor's FY11 mid-term budget**

**By Jill Spinetti, President and CEO
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DBA The Governor's Prevention Partnership
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Good evening, Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, Senator Harris, Representative Ryan and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jill Spinetti and I am the president of The Governor's Prevention Partnership. Our non-profit organization is recognizing its 20th anniversary this year and we focus on providing resources and services so that young people in our state will grow up free from substance abuse, underage drinking, violence, and bullying and be able to take their place in our future workforce.

I'm here today to ask for your continued support for prevention programs so that our young people can grow and thrive in nurturing families and communities. I commend DMHAS, the General Assembly and State of Connecticut on its leadership and belief in prevention over the past years and the dedication of my colleagues who work tirelessly on behalf of our young people.

3 key messages that I'd like to provide about prevention in Connecticut are as follows:

1. Prevention is cost effective and saves the state money. We know that nearly \$10 is returned for every dollar invested in prevention. Our public-private partnership model has been put to work for 20 years, and in that time we have leveraged over \$14 million dollars in private funding from businesses and corporations and foundations, matching the government's investment in prevention. Right now we are working with 110 businesses that provide resources for youth mentoring programs. The Partnership provides the expertise to help prevention programs grow and enlist businesses to invest in prevention.

2. Threats continue to occur—right now, prescription drug abuse is becoming more prevalent among teens and communities across the state. The Partnership along with DMHAS, DEA, the Regional Action Councils and many others are working together to address the problem. Earlier in the week, we distributed to all of the legislators an invitation to a town hall meeting that will be held in collaboration with Comcast on March 4 designed to raise awareness and education parents to safeguard their medicine cabinets. Whether it's cyberbullying, underage drinking, or

prescription or over the counter drug abuse, these threats are constant. In my 11 ½ years with The Partnership I've seen waves of similar threats come and go—but the constant is that the prevention community remains poised and ready to attack the problem as a first line of defense.

3. During times of economic stress we must remain vigilant.

As families face uncertain times, an investment in prevention will net a tremendous return in costs saved in treatment and incarceration to name two.

How does The Partnership add value during unsure economic times?

- We work in partnership to maximize resources
- We stretch every dollar that comes our way by attracting private and federal funding
- We scan the environment for threats and respond immediately and effectively; and
- We work to leverage funding by strengthening the public-private partnership.

We continue to partner with DMHAS on some of their federal initiatives and in 2009 we also were also able to get some direct

federal funding to support mentoring. Our corporate partners have been generous, and over the past year we have been able to create a true state-federal-private partnership. We have made cuts where necessary, but our commitment and our passion for prevention of youth substance abuse and violence remains strong and intact.

I'm here this evening to ask for your continued support for prevention and to also offer to serve as a resource on the issues that we cover including youth mentoring, underage and high risk drinking, substance abuse including prescription drug abuse and prevention of bullying.

Thank you for your support.