



**Testimony for General Law Committee  
On the Electronic Prescription Drug Monitoring Program  
H.B. 6406, An Act Concerning the Electronic Prescription Drug Monitoring Program**

**By Jennifer DeWitt, Executive Director  
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Good evening, Senator Doyle, Representative Baram, Senator Fonfara, Representative Kiner and distinguished members of the General Law Committee. My name is Jennifer DeWitt and I am the Executive Director of the Central Naugatuck Valley Regional Action Council. Our Regional Action Council focuses on the prevention of substance abuse, problem gambling, and suicide. Through a strong network of Local Prevention Councils and partnering community stakeholders, we work collaboratively to build the capacity of our coalition and the towns that it serves to deliver evidence-based prevention strategies, a positive youth development framework, and a network of support & connection to our direct service providers.

I am here today to ask for your support in strengthening the Electronic Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PMP) to help reduce the availability of prescription drugs to Connecticut's youth. The CNVRAC has worked collaboratively with the DCP for many years to prevent youth substance abuse, and we strongly support this proposal to improve and expand the requirements of the PMP, which will increase the ability to determine misuse or diversion of controlled substances.

Connecticut experts have been tracking the growing problem of prescription drug abuse for several years. Substance abuse admissions to State facilities have nearly doubled in Connecticut over the past four years, with clients indicating primary usage of prescription drugs. One in three drug-related deaths in Connecticut were related to the use of opiates (heroin and/or prescription drugs) from the State Medical Examiner's Office's most recent report. Prescription drug abuse has become the leading cause of death for those aged 15-34 in Connecticut, according to 2010 data from the Housatonic Valley Coalition Against Substance Abuse and Western Connecticut State University. The abuse of such drugs by that age group is now statistically more deadly than car accidents.

*Preventing substance abuse, addictions and other harmful behaviors.*

Prescription drug abuse rates among youth have significantly risen statewide. Teens illegally use prescription drugs at rates higher than that of cocaine and heroin combined. For the past four years Connecticut high school surveys have shown that nearly 10% of students report having using prescription drugs to get high at least once.

The majority of those who abuse prescription painkillers get drugs from a friend or relative. Fewer than 20% get them from a doctor, according to a 2010 report by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, yet in the war against drug abuse, a key strategy is to reduce this availability.

There are many strategies currently underway in our communities to prevent prescription drug abuse, including prescription drug take-back efforts, raising awareness and education programs. However, **one of the best prevention strategies is to reduce the supply by tracking and monitoring controlled substances that are dispensed.** Reducing the diversion and illicit use of prescription medications is a top priority of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Bureau of Justice Assistance in the Department of Justice (DOJ) as well as Connecticut law enforcement agencies. Among the most promising resources recognized and supported by these agencies are prescription drug monitoring programs.

PMP data can help identify questionable patterns of prescribing that are often involved in drug diversion, such as a patient receiving multiple prescriptions from different doctors, or “doctor shopping.” This data reduces time spent on drug diversion investigations, saving taxpayers money and keeping more drugs off the street, as stated by a recent federal report. There are many examples of the success of this program and in Wyoming, PMP reports that patients who were possible “doctor shoppers” reduced the number of medically unnecessary prescriptions written by doctors for some of the patients in question.

The experts at the DCP who support the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program are moving technically in the right direction to upgrade the system and **the end result will be to get more people who abuse prescription drugs into treatment and to ultimately reduce the supply of drugs that could be misused.**

In closing, a strengthened Prescription Drug Monitoring Program enhances ongoing and future prevention efforts to protect communities and our youth from the availability of prescription drugs and the dangers of its abuse.

Thank you for your support.