

**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 Jill Spinetti, President and CEO
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DBA The Governor's Prevention Partnership
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Good evening, Senators Doyle and Witkos, Representatives Baram and Carter, and distinguished members of the General Law Committee. My name is Jill Spinetti and I am the president of The Governor's Prevention Partnership. Our non-profit organization focuses on providing resources to law enforcement, community coalitions, educators, state agencies, youth groups and parents to prevent substance abuse, underage drinking, and bullying among Connecticut's youth, in support of a strong future workforce.

I am here today to ask for your support in strengthening the Electronic Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PMP), HB 6406, to help reduce the availability of prescription drugs to Connecticut's youth. The Partnership has had a strong collaborative partnership 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.

I have also been asked to represent the treatment community through Connecticut Turning to Youth and Families and their partners, the regional action councils and several other prevention organizations in asking for your support for HB6406.

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.

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 such as in Wyoming, where their PMP reports that patients who were identified as possible “doctor shoppers” reduced their number of medically unnecessary prescriptions written by doctors.

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. While this program has been seen as an added burden by some prescribers, most support it and we appreciate their commitment.

In closing, a strengthened Prescription Drug Monitoring Program in Connecticut enhances ongoing and future prevention efforts to protect communities and our youth from the availability of prescription drugs and the dangers of its abuse. Please support HB 6406, an Act Concerning the Electronic Prescription Drug Monitoring Program.

Thank you.