

**TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**

**March 22, 2013**

*Benjamin Barnes  
Secretary  
Office of Policy and Management*

Testimony Supporting House Bill No. 6616

AN ACT CONCERNING THE GOVERNOR'S PREVENTION BUDGET

---

---

Senator Harp, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on House Bill No. 6616, An Act Concerning the Governor's Prevention Budget.

This bill would repeal the requirement for the Governor to present a "prevention budget" as part of his biennial budget document. Currently, the Connecticut General Statutes require this report on the Governor's recommendations for appropriations for prevention services to children, youth and families. The repeal of this report is recommended for four main reasons:

First, the original intent of the prevention budget was to raise awareness of primary prevention. However, the Child Poverty and Prevention Council fulfills the purpose of highlighting the importance of primary prevention programs and provides a forum for interagency collaboration on prevention initiatives. The statutory requirements for the Child Poverty and Prevention Council include a report on the prevention activities of state agencies. The production of the prevention budget is no longer necessary since it duplicates the efforts of the Child Poverty and Prevention Council.

Second, the production of each prevention budget requires a significant time commitment from OPM staff, as well as staff from other state agencies. It's fair to say that hundreds of staff hours are needed to develop the prevention budget. With fewer staff and ever-increasing statutory requirements, it is difficult to dedicate the staff resources necessary to produce the report. Just this past year, in the short legislative session of 2012, OPM was tasked with responsibility for ten new statutory task forces, councils, boards and projects. Repeal of the prevention budget requirement will help my agency dedicate the staff necessary to respond to new legislative priorities.

Third, the document is underutilized or, frankly, not used at all. The last six prevention budgets have been produced and disseminated without a single

question, inquiry, or reference to the substance of the report by legislators. It clearly is not a valuable tool utilized by decision makers in developing the state's budget.

And finally, there is a common misunderstanding that this statutory requirement provides us with some information about prevention services and funding in our state. It does not. What it does provide is information regarding the Governor's proposed appropriations for prevention programs. So, we can identify what percentage of the Governor's budget proposal is dedicated to prevention programming and we can compare what the Governor proposes from year to year, but it does not provide information regarding any state investments in prevention programming.

I would like to again thank the committee for the opportunity to present this testimony. I respectfully request that the Committee take favorable action on this bill and I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.