

**Testimony of Erica Augustine-Mullins, Owner, Strike-a-Pose Salon  
concerning funding for Regional Action Councils in**

H.B. No. 6824 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING  
JUNE THIRTIETH 2017, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR AND OTHER  
PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE.

*Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services - March 6, 2015*

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Gerratana, Representative Dillon, and Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Erica Augustine-Mullins, owner of Strike-a-Pose Hair Salon in Middletown, Connecticut. I am also a board member of the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce. The business community is very concerned about funding cuts to human services. Unstable families, mental illness, and drug abuse do not contribute to a thriving economy. They do not give us a solid customer base. I see this personally at the micro-level, and I know it's true at the macro-level as well.

I am particularly concerned about substance abuse prevention. In my view, "prevention" means that the entire community recognizes the harm of alcohol and drug abuse. The entire community gets involved in keeping young people away from drugs. Combine prevention with early intervention, and you've got a wonderful means of keeping your community healthy. This is the work of the Regional Action Councils, or RACs. My own RAC includes school staff, health providers, parents, clergy, elected officials, business people, people in recovery, and many more.

The governor's budget would cut funding to RACs by more than 75%. We must not let this happen! The small staff size of each RAC hides an enormous amount of work: they provide resources to health teachers; keep us updated on the latest trends in alcohol, marijuana and prescription drug abuse; mount public campaigns on underage drinking; host community forums and trainings, and strategize with law enforcement. In my community, they work closely with our hospital's behavioral health unit.

The entire, statewide RAC system of thirteen agencies costs little more than one million dollars. The RACs are funded entirely from the Pre-Trial Account. This core funding keeps the system afloat and allows the RACs to raise additional private dollars. Please restore the \$1.1 million funding to the Regional Action Councils. Thank you.