

Testimony for Public Hearing - Appropriations Committee
March 6, 2015

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S.M.A.R.T., Inc. (Local Prevention Council) for Southbury/Middlebury

Governor’s H. B. No. 6924 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2017, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE.

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Gerratana, Representative Dillon and members of the Appropriations Subcommittee:

My name is Noel Federle and I am a mom of two teenaged children, a licensed psychotherapist with twenty years’ experience working with people who struggle with mental health and addiction issues, and the chairperson for a solely volunteer non-profit agency that has the responsibility of being our local prevention council for a regional school district. I have dedicated my life (professionally and personally) to ensuring prevention, intervention, awareness and treatment are available to those who need it in an effort to ensure all people maximize their personal potential and have the most meaningful life possible. I would not be able to do the work I do without the support and resources of our Regional Action Council. I am writing to you today to **OPPOSE the proposed budget cuts under the Governor’s Bill No. 6824.**

**RESTORE REGIONAL ACTION COUNCIL FUNDING- PROPOSED BUDGET CUTS
RACs BY ALMOST 80%**

The Governor’s proposed budget would cut the regional action councils from \$1.1 million in funding to at most \$233,899 which would equate to a 79% cut.

The Connecticut Prevention Network (CPN) is an association of the state’s 13 community partnership Regional Action Councils (RACs) that work to provide every community in the state with education, training, and advocacy for substance abuse prevention and related community concerns such as behavioral health, violence, gambling, drunk driving, prescription drugs, opioids and suicide.

Most of the RACs would be unable to survive such a drastic cut! Despite leveraging other funding this would decimate the current system of regional action councils.

In Southbury/Middlebury alone, our regional action council, the CNVRAC has been an integral force in the development of the following initiatives:

- Promotion & coordination of a comprehensive youth risk behavior and resiliency survey conducted with all students in grades 7-12 throughout Regional School District No. 15
- Promotion & coordination of a district-wide youth-led analysis of local-level risk and protective factors affecting adolescent substance use, education, risk of suicide, bullying, safety, and other areas affecting health and wellness among young people
- Provided Grant Application technical assistance and oversight to SMART: *Southbury & Middlebury Acting Responsibly Together*, the designated Local Substance Abuse Prevention Council for my community
- Coordination and development of local-level Drug Endangered Child (DEC) Alliance between Police Department, Department of Children & Families, and the statewide DEC office
- Promotion & Coordination of DEC training for Law Enforcement, School Administration and Pupil Services Staff, area social service agencies, probation, parole, DCF Caseworkers, and other related professionals
- Promotion of a permanent Medication Drop Box installation and the DEA *Got Drugs?* disposal day, a cost-effective opioid deterrence measure
- Sub-regional and local training delivery: 40 Developmental Assets for Youth; Opioid Abuse Prevention Forum; Financial Wellness for Seniors and Problem Gambling Prevention Across the Lifespan; Local Prevention Council “101”; Local Prevention Council Capacity Building; Local Prevention Council TA: Prevention Strategies & Effective Service Delivery
- Development and dissemination of Opioid Overdose Wallet Card to prevent opioid overdose and deaths
- Parent University Series – Informative workshops for parents of children K-College on prevention, awareness, intervention and treatment.
- Mental Health First Aid course for community members to be knowledgeable on signs and symptoms of mental health and addiction disorders.
- A resource support for our school systems, town offices, parents and community members at large.
- Coordination & Delivery of Innovative Media Campaign on Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention
 1. Parents’ Guide to Prescription Drug Abuse Inserts in weekly, monthly, and quarterly news publications
 2. Realtor Flyers Distribution to local Boards of Realtors

As you can see by the above listing of events the enormity of the impact the RAC has in our regional district alone due to the valuable resources and services they have provided. Mental health and addiction issues are ever present in every demographic area, gender, race and community. We are no different in our struggle with combating these issues in our young people and in our communities. We have lost far too many young people to accidental overdoses and

many others whose lives have been destroyed by the devastation of mental health and addiction issues. The local, state and national level data all show an upward trend in earlier age of onset, an increase in prescription pill usage, and in heroin overdoses. Why would anyone think this is the time to cut funding to the prevention programs that accomplish so much with the already limited funds available? This is the time to work ever more diligently to prevent further unnecessary deaths and tackle these issues head on.

In closing, I **OPPOSE the proposed budget cuts under the Governor's Bill No. 6824.** If the state budget eliminates regional action councils, these and countless other important prevention services and local-level supports will be lost. It is my hope that I have impressed upon you the gravity of this potential budget cut, so that we may preserve our prevention infrastructure, saving long-term costs and at the end of the day, saving lives.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Noel Federle, M.A., NCC, LPC

S.M.A.R.T., Inc. Chairperson

Southbury/Middlebury