

**Testimony of Anne & Raymond Kaiser, Concerned Parents
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 Anne Kaiser and I live in Cromwell, Connecticut. I am testifying on behalf of my husband, Raymond Kaiser, and myself. We come before you as concerned family members who have a family member who suffers from the illness of addiction. With the combination of availability of treatment centers, counseling, reflection, 12 step programs and family support the family member is an addict in recovery and a successful college student. There are thousands of families across Connecticut who will endure the same anguish – an anguish that might be prevented with resources such as that which is provided by the Connecticut Regional Action Councils.

What is substance abuse awareness and prevention? In my experience, it's a wide variety of things. It's knowing the signs of drug abuse; what to look for in your child. It's knowing how to respond and where to get help. Awareness and prevention means the support and availability of health professionals when your loved ones substance use is in its early stages and so much easier to treat. In fact, "awareness and prevention" is the whole of a community coming to terms with alcohol and drug addiction. *All* people are vulnerable to some kind of dependency. Addiction has no boundaries when it comes to selecting its victims. It may be a young, naïve individual or a successful business person who has become addicted to pain medication.

The Connecticut Regional Action Councils are devoted to substance abuse awareness and prevention. I became involved with my local RAC for this very reason. They provide resources to health teachers; keep everyone updated on the latest trends in alcohol, marijuana and prescription drug abuse; mount public campaigns on underage drinking; host community forums and training events, and strategize with law enforcement. They work closely with our local hospital's behavioral health unit. This effort may help an individual who is going down a dangerous path, a friend to help a friend or even a young person to help a parent. RAC is staffed by just one full- and one part-time person. I'm amazed at the efficiency and accomplishments of the organization.

The entire statewide RAC system costs \$1.1 million dollars. Presently, the State of Connecticut funds the RACs entirely from the Pre-Trial Account. The governor has proposed an approximate 75% cut. While many RACs have additional (usually smaller) sources of income, the \$1.1 million provides core funding without which the system cannot survive. I ask that you restore the funding to the Regional Action Councils. What may be spent today may save in the long run state funds spent on those individuals who end up in jail or court mandated treatment centers. Thank you for your attention to this matter.