



**TO: Senator Bye, Representative Walker & members of the Appropriations Committee**  
**FROM: Community Organizations in Eastern CT (See bottom for individual names)**  
**RE: DMHAS budget – March 6, 2015 hearing**

We present this testimony to you, for consideration on behalf of Northeast Communities Against Substance Abuse (NECASA), one of the Regional Action Councils (RACs) for Northeast Connecticut, and a member of the Connecticut Prevention Network. We urge you to reconsider the proposed cuts to all of the RAC's throughout the state, as we feel their work in substance abuse prevention is vital to the health and well-being of our communities.

The work done by NECASA has had comprehensive impact across the many towns it serves, for the last 25 years. Bob Brex, the Executive Director of NECASA, has been very successful at not only implementing prevention curriculums in the schools and surrounding communities, but he has also been able to collaborate with a variety of community partners to provide both financial and technical assistance to the twenty-one towns in our region. Over time, NECASA has brought 2.5 Million dollars into the region as an organization and has helped other organizations in the region realize an additional 2.5 million dollars in grants through mentoring and support. This is all in addition to the state funds provided to NECASA. This is crucial in our rural area, as Northeastern CT often faces the substance use and related social issues that are more typical of an urban setting, but lacks the resources found in the urban centers. Leveraging funds and collaboration within the community are essential factors, for effective and sustainable programming, and NECASA and the RAC's statewide are exceptional examples of doing both.

Please see below for a list of the contributions made to the community by NECASA over the last 25 years:

- \* Provided one million dollars to Local Prevention Councils in the region
- \* purchased evidence-based health curriculums and funded teacher training in ten school districts in Northeast Connecticut.
- \* Helped Establish a Drug Intervention Program in the Danielson Superior Court
- \* Established two Drug Endangered Children's Alliances in Windham and Brooklyn/Killingly
- \* Mentored the Town of Putnam and the Town of Windham so that they could receive their own Federal Drug-Free grants, total funding once completed of over one million dollars each.
- \* Conducted school surveys and provided analysis to schools in the region and then provided stipends for projects in the schools.

This is in addition to continuing to do the planning for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services on both prevention and treatment for the region.

Research shows that prevention, in any model, is the approach that has the most successful and lasting results. The state's financial resources for prevention must be at least maintained, if we are to be successful in improving the health and well-being of our communities, which will result in a healthier and more productive state overall. The proposed budget cuts to the RAC's diminish the priority of our community's health, by dismantling the prevention infrastructure of Connecticut. The State's Regional Action Councils are a large part of that infrastructure with their ability to reach diverse and varied sectors of the communities we serve. The RACs do not do this work in a vacuum but work with other members of the infrastructure such as the Governor' prevention Partnership ,the Connecticut Clearinghouse and Youth Service Bureaus and also locally with the schools, colleges, hospitals, police, businesses and agencies to educate and prevent substance abuse and stop it from becoming an even greater problem. If the budget were to be adopted as it is proposed, it will cripple prevention in our state and leave us with treatment after abuse has begun, as our only community wide response. This cannot be our only strategy in our struggle for a healthier Connecticut! Thank you for your time and attention.

***Melissa Bonsall, COO  
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***Miranda Nangle, Prevention Program Supervisor  
Community Health Resources, Inc.***

***Diane Manning, CEO  
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