

Testimony for Public Hearing - Appropriations Committee
March 6, 2015

Susanne Navas (Parent, Coach, Community Activist)
49 Kettletown Woods Rd, Southbury
Representing concerned citizens

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 Susanne Navas and I am a concerned parent as well as someone who works hard, both professionally and as a community volunteer and activist, to prevent further suffering, violence and death that results from the growing problems in the area of mental health, addiction, substance abuse. I stand before you this evening 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 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
- 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

I have been trained in Mental Health First Aid and in that training I was equipped with the tools to detect when others were in trouble. Less than 2 weeks ago, for example, a friend who knew I had gone through the training contacted me as she feared that her brother was at risk of violence, and with my training I knew what to do and he is now receiving the treatment he needs.

I have also been trained in the 40 Developmental Assets and have used this another other training I received thanks to CNVRAC, to help design various after school and summer programs for the youth in our area (including Southbury, Middlebury, Newtown, Waterbury, Watertown).

I cannot overstate my dismay in hearing that legislators may be so short-sighted as to cut funding for programs that have a proven track record of prevention. Being on the “ground” in communities benefited by these initiatives and the tireless efforts by passionate social workers, prevention workers, etc., I truly believe that going forward with the proposed budget cuts would be extremely destructive. I believe I speak for the majority in my community, who have witnessed far too many deaths, crimes and other preventable suffering, in saying that going

forward with the cuts, especially in an area that has inevitably been deeply affected by the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, would be absolutely insane.

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,

Susanne Navas

Southbury