

Testimony for Public Hearing - Appropriations Committee
March 6, 201
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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 Nan Richardson and as a mother of two children in Connecticut communities and public schools, I stand before you this evening to **OPPOSE the proposed budget cuts under the Governor's Bill No. 6824.**

In April of last year I found my teenaged son unconscious in his bed lying in a bodily fluid mess no mother should ever see. Jake is a great kid. Smart, handsome, intelligent and well-loved. I am a good mother. Loving, educated, involved. None of this made any difference when it came to the havoc that drugs wrought in my family.

I naively accepted my membership into the common "not my kid" mindset of parents who know, but choose not to know, that their children use drugs. It was just pot, after all. Yet, last April, one decision to experiment with stronger drugs almost cost my son his life. Worse still, the dazzle and power of the sensationalized drug world captivated my influential adolescent. The once-upon-a-time Boy Scout, lacrosse defenseman and trombone player brought my family into a world I had only seen in movies.

Compromising the funding that supports the Regional Action Council, and by proxy Local Prevention Councils, will have far-reaching, devastating effects in Connecticut's communities. With substance use, addiction and mental health needs at unprecedented rates, it is nonsensical to slash the budgets of the very programs designed to combat these epidemics.

Mine is not just a plea as a mother who has lived through unimaginable hell, but also the voice of a concerned citizen who wants her tax dollars to make a difference in the lives of the individuals, families and communities that make up this great state. The right decision - the only decision - is to oppose the proposed budget cuts under the Governor's Bill Number 6824. Thank you.

**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 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
- 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

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,

Nancy Richardson

Middlebury