

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Southern Connecticut

Testimony of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

In support of continued funding for the Regional Mental Health Boards and Regional Action Councils

The Regional Mental Health Boards (RMHBs) are vital to Connecticut's behavioral health planning and inform best practice and policy. They provide a structure for grassroots involvement which allows all stakeholders a voice in the oversight, coordination and evaluation of our mental health care system.

The RMHBs respond to local, regional and state needs through strong community partnerships, effective outreach and consensus building, and the provision of education and training on various aspects of mental health and access to services. The ability to reach multiple segments of our population- consumers of services, their supporters, as well as providers and other stakeholders makes Connecticut a best-practice state in its ability to respond to emerging needs and adapt rapidly changing models of care.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention chapter of southern Connecticut has worked hand in hand with the Southwestern Regional Mental Health Board (SWRMHB) to increase knowledge of suicide prevention resources, as well as increase the accessibility of desperately needed mental health services for those constituents who struggle with thoughts of suicide, as well as survivors of suicide loss. Looking ahead, our organizations have agreed to co-sponsor Mental Health First Aid and Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) free of charge to first responders, education professionals, and other gatekeepers within our community. SWRMHB is an invaluable asset to our region; without our RMHBs it would be impossible to have a responsive and relevant model of mental health care.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention strongly urges the continued funding of the RMHBs. Consumers of mental health services are one of the most underserved populations in the United States, and our RMHBs have been at the forefront of ensuring that the Department of Mental Health Services provide the most effective and highest quality mental health services. The loss of our RMHBs would be a loss to a large segment of our population, as well as make an already difficult task even more difficult to accomplish-the mission of providing accessible and quality care to those most in need.

Sincerely,