



Providing behavioral health
and domestic violence services

Greater Valley Substance
Abuse Action Council (VSAAC)

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March 18, 2015

Public Health Committee
Room 3000, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Attn: Senator Gerrata, Representative Ritter, and Members of the Public Health Committee

My name is Pamela Mautte, and I am the Director of the Greater Valley Substance Abuse Action Council (VSAAC), and an active member of the CT Prevention Network which is made up of the 13 Regional Action Councils (RAC). My Regional Action Council (RAC) oversees alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use prevention efforts within the 11 towns including: Ansonia, Bethany, Derby, Orange, Oxford, Milford, New Haven, Seymour, Shelton, West Haven, and Woodbridge.

I am writing this testimony in support of **Governor's Bill No. 6856** in which the legislation provides crucial components of implementing expansion of prescriber education regarding opiates and pain management, and guidelines for utilization of the prescription monitoring program.

VSAAC and the Regional Action Councils have been monitoring and addressing opiate issues for the past several years. Through our work in the 169 communities in CT, this legislation supports our recommendations and will have a significant impact in reducing opiate abuse and strengthen the usage of the prescription monitoring program (PMP).

I am supporting this proposed bill for the following reasons:

- The U.S. consumes 99% of all hydrocodone and 80% of all opioids.
- Current trends highlight that there are a lack of prescribers who can adequately treat pain.
- Research shows that changes in brain receptors occur after the first dose of an opiate-based medication.
- Evidence-based physician education can ensure safe and effective pain management and prescribing measures that can help to reduce the problem of opioid abuse.
- Utilization of the Prescription Monitoring Programs before dispensing medication can significantly improve decision making, patient care, and identify and reduce doctor shopping.

This past year the Regional Action Councils held 15 community opiate forums in our sub-regions of the state. VSAAC held 2 forums due to the overwhelming response at the first forum. The outcomes of the forums held were consistent statewide. I am sharing with you today, the outcomes of VSAAC's forums that support this proposed legislation. The top recommendations from more than 100 participants at both of VSAAC's forums:

- Support the implementation of evidence-based curricula that address prescription drug misuse and abuse for providers.

- Utilize the prescription monitoring system & support legislation regarding prescription monitoring programs.
- Increase the number of trainings and professional development opportunities available to law enforcement, other safety personnel, educators, and businesses.

VSAAC also was instrumental in the support of a study funded by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) with principal investigator Traci Green, PhD, MSc, Assistant Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology, the Warren Alpert School of Medicine at Brown University. Based on the premise that **drug overdoses in CT are the leading cause of adult injury and death (out-numbering the combined deaths resulting from motor vehicle accidents, fire and firearms)** the study sought to identify issues that surround these overdose injuries and deaths. Two communities in CT were selected to be part of the study which aimed to determine and understand why high rates of prescription opioid abuse and overdose is occurring in these communities. These communities include Ansonia and Wallingford. Some of the studies recommendations in the action plan included:

- Increasing usage of prescription monitoring program (PMP) as currently they are underutilized
- Prescriber mandates which included education and use of the PMP
- Prescriber toolkits and Addiction Medicine residency programs
- Increasing medication drop boxes
- Targeted medical education
- Public awareness campaign
- Naloxone distribution and first responder prevention

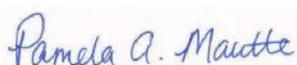
A survey of prescribers in Rhode Island and Connecticut found that those who made use of PMP data were more likely than non-users to take clinically appropriate action in response to suspected cases of prescription drug abuse or diversion by patients, such as conducting drug screens or referring them to substance abuse treatment. (Green, T. et al. How does use of prescription monitoring program change medical practice? *Pain Medicine*, 2012. Oct; 13(10):1314-23).

VSAAC collaborated with Pharmacon and Griffin Hospital to host a CME workshop in our community titles "The Problem of Prescription Drug Abuse in the Lower Naugatuck Valley" in 2011 and more than 200 healthcare professionals attended.

VSAAC has distributed more than 1,000 overdose prevention cards throughout our communities and have been instrumental in establishing medication drop boxes at local police departments and continue working on public awareness campaigns.

We have made significant efforts here in CT and this proposed bill will close the loop on the remaining open action plan items and make CT healthier and safer.

Respectfully Submitted,



Pamela A. Mautte
Director, VSAAC