



**Connecticut Association of Prevention Practitioners, Inc.**

H.B. No. 6824 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2017, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE.

*Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services - March 6, 2015*

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Gerratana, Representative Dillon and members of the Appropriations subcommittee, as the Connecticut Association of Prevention Practitioners, we are offering testimony in strong opposition to the proposed cuts to the regional action councils and youth service bureaus.

We all know the challenges that our young people face on a daily basis. Aside from the stress that comes from navigating adolescence, they are faced with threats that would potentially prevent them from thriving, from gambling to drugs and alcohol. We are fortunate in our state to have a prevention infrastructure that provides services dedicated to reducing threats to youth and helping to raise a generation of successful, confident, drug free youth. The proposed cuts could potentially cut the Regional Action Councils (RACs) by up to 80%, greatly impacting the effectiveness of their programs and reach, while causing many of them to go out of business. This would leave the RACs unable to provide:

- Community mobilization and grant collaboration
- Substance abuse awareness, education and prevention initiatives
- Behavioral health awareness and promoting the use of Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment
- Media advocacy, program development, legislative advocacy
- Leverage funds for local initiatives and conduct fundraising activities to fill gaps
- Community needs assessment with surveys, data collection and trainings
- Develop a biannual epidemiologic report of substance use/abuse and recommendations for changes to the community environment
- To conduct activities to implement the initiatives identified in the report.
- To conduct activities to promote visibility for the Regional Action Council.

Between the Regional Action Councils and Youth Service Bureaus we have had a system in place that has allowed us to leverage millions of dollars in federal grants through opportunities like the Drug-free Communities Support and Mentoring programs. To strip our state of these resources at a time where we need to continue to move forward and focus on issues like mental health and substance abuse prevention and treatment would be extraordinarily detrimental.



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- Between 2009 –2013, there were **over 1,900 accidental and unintentional opioid involved deaths** that occurred in 150 of Connecticut’s 169 cities and towns. (Source:AIDS-CT Nalaxone (Narcan) Fact Sheet Feb 2015)
- **Myths about marijuana** and misunderstandings of decriminalization laws and medical marijuana contribute to the **rise in use by youth**
- The **30-day use of alcohol by youth** aged 12-17 is higher in Connecticut than in the nation – both casual use and “binge” drinking ( five or more drinks on a single occasion at least once). (RAC Epidemiological report Jan 2013)
- The number of U.S. middle and high school students using **e-cigarettes doubled between 2011 and 2012**,  
source:<http://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2013/p0905-ecigarette-use.html>)
- **Smoking rates** for those living with **mental illness and with substance use disorders are 2-4 times higher** than the rates of the general population
- Among CT youth (Grades 9-12), **14%** have seriously **considered suicide**, **11%** have made a **suicide plan**, and **7%** have **attempted suicide** (CT Suicide Advisory Board)

While this proposed budget seeks to save money right now, we have to think of the long-term effect of cutting prevention funding. Prevention is known to save money on treatment, hospital visits, property damage, and other related social costs. According to the Underage Drinking Training Enforcement Center, in 2010 underage drinking alone cost Connecticut approximately \$615,900,000 (youth violence, property damage, poisonings, treatment, and more).

We urge you to please reconsider the proposed cuts, and to think about the value that these programs add to the health and safety of our youth. Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Daviau". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "D".

John Daviau  
President, CAPP