

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
HB 1234 An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations
March 4, 2015

Alphonse Wright, New Britain CT

Good evening Senator Bye and Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Alphonse Wright, Chairman of the African-American Affairs Commission. I am a registered voter in the town of New Britain.

I am here to testify on **HB 1234, An Act Concerning the Governor's Budget Recommendations.**

I am opposed to the proposed cuts to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. This budget proposes to eliminate \$585,000.00 from the Regional Mental Health Boards (RMBDs). This proposal will adversely affect the Community Education & Engagement function of the RMBDs, especially the coordination of Mental Health First Aid Training, Community Conversations and other presentations to raise community awareness.

The Mission of the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC) is: "To improve and promote the economic development, education, health and political well being of the African-American Community in the State of Connecticut through advocacy, information sharing, cultural awareness, community networking and influencing legislation."

Representing the AAAC, I have been involved with the North Central Regional Mental Health Board (NCRMHB) as a facilitator in their Community Conversations about Health Reform, more specifically the Affordable Care Act, to help promote health literacy, health awareness and health well being in the African-American Community in New Britain. After a great response from my church, Grace CME Church in New Britain, the idea came to expand the Community Conversations to the members of the New Britain Black Council of Churches. The ministers were excited to have an opportunity to expand their church Health Ministries.

Outcome! Partnering with NCRMHB we wrote a grant. We were one of eight recipients of the 2015 BRSS TACS Peer Health Reform Education Grants. We need our partner, Northern Central Regional Mental Health Board, to successfully implement health literacy, health awareness and health well being with the New Britain Black Council of Churches. After that, our goal is to have these Health Reform Conversations throughout the African-American Communities in the State of Connecticut to help NCRMHB with its goals as well as assist the AAAC in meeting its Mission.

I urge the Committee to restore the funding allocated to the North Central Regional Mental Health Board.

My favorite quote is: "It is not within our power to place the Divine teachings directly in to someone's heart. All we can do is place them on the surface of the heart so that when the heart breaks, they drop in." I place this request on the surface of the heart of the Appropriations Committee, so that when its heart breaks this request drops in.

I thank the Appropriations Committee for allowing me the opportunity to speak on this issue.