

For: S.B. No. 946, An Act Concerning Revenue Items to Implement the Governor's Budget.
3/5/15

I have objections to the Governor's proposals and cutbacks and am writing you to express my concerns with very important programs that are in danger of being eliminated in the Governor's budget. I speak as a citizen, a taxpayer and a retired employee from the Mental Health Industry.

Part 1 - Madonna Place

Madonna Place is a non-profit Agency serving approximately 3000 families annually, parents and children, in the New London County area.

All funding directed to the Family School Connection Program, via the Children's Trust Budget in the Office of Early Childhood, has been eliminated by the Governor's Budget.

In addition, three sources of State Funding for Fatherhood....including the DSS, DCF and Family Empowerment Program from Office of Early Childhood....have been eliminated.

I hereby request that you support the restoration of these critical funds as they will substantially affect children and families throughout our community. We need to move forward...and not backward...with these programs.

Part 2 - Group Objections to proposals....

About 25 Groton area residents met with our local CT Rep Aundre Bumgardner and myself, hosted at the Noank Community Market, earlier this week to discuss various topics of concern. The meeting lasted for over 2 hours with lively participation. We collectively objected to the following areas of the budget:

a) We don't like the idea of highway tolls at the borders, or the concept of a CT Pilot Program being enacted without direct voter approval. It will place an unfair burden on residents living near state borders.

When Rt 95 in CT was constructed years ago and tollbooths were later removed, the Federal Government provided additional funds for highway maintenance. Why have these funds not been utilized for their intended purpose? Why have they been shifted to other projects?

b) Local package store owners are concerned about the Governor's plans to increase hours and make more concessions to "big box" stores. Additionally, staying open too late creates safety issues for merchants, as well as customers themselves who shouldn't be already intoxicated and then driving on the road. Late hours for package stores should be eliminated.

We went through this subject previously. In addition, why would the Governor want to destroy small businesses in favor of the larger ones? Why would he give big business the competitive advantage?

c) The Governor's budget proposes to reduce Mental Health services which are needed more than ever, especially with the trend toward outpatient services and individual counseling. Proposed cuts in these areas should be canceled and/or restored. This also relates to Part 1 above.

There is a greatly increased need for proper counseling services. Have we already forgotten the tragedy of the Sandy Hook massacre? Have we forgotten that the lack of proper mental health services, communication, individual treatment and behavior modification counseling were major contributing factors?

It wasn't just a problem with firearms....and a great deal of study went into this subject after the tragedy. I personally contributed information for Senator Andrew Maynard on these subjects for the hearings at that time.

Thank you for reviewing my remarks.

Edward R. Johnson, 87 main Street, Groton, CT 06340 phone/fax 860 536 1589

E-mail: Ed_Johnson@tvconnect.net