

To Appropriations Committee Members:

As the Commissioner of Social Services for the Town of Greenwich, I am writing to the Committee to ask that you seriously reconsider the proposed budget cuts to Regional Mental Health Boards and RACs. These agencies have once again been included as line item cuts in the Governor's budget.

I am certainly not questioning that there is a serious problem with the state budget and without raising taxes requires significant cuts in state services. Unfortunately, these cuts will have dramatic consequences for many of the vulnerable state residents relying upon the services provided by state departments such as DMHAS. So if there has to be cuts they need to be determined in as intelligent and sensitive way as possible. Who better to provide that kind of objective feedback and advice than the Regional Mental Health Boards and RACs?

These advisory agencies were set up to provide the state with planning, evaluation and education services that assist in establishing quality behavioral health programs and services for each region. They evaluate state funded programs and provide invaluable information to the state on the operation and effectiveness of these programs' services. The Regional Mental Health Boards and RACs mission is to ensure that programs are meeting the needs of behavioral health clients and demand accountability from state operated and funded programs. They are your "eyes and ears" in the community and without them will leave a void that will significantly diminish services to behavioral health clients.

Taking out the Regional Mental Health Boards and RACS seems like an easy decision but destroys one of the most important features of a robust and responsive government; citizen advisory boards that provide an important and integral role in grass-roots participation and keeping state funded services accountable.

I once again respectfully ask that you reconsider the cuts that would virtually close the Regional Mental Health Boards and RACs.

Sincerely,

Alan D. Barry, Ph.D.
Commissioner, Department of Social Services Town of Greenwich