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**Testimony for Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Health
H.B. 5044 - Governor's Proposed Budget Adjustments**

**By Jill Spineti, President and CEO
The Governor's Partnership to Protect Connecticut's Workforce
DBA The Governor's Prevention Partnership
February 18, 2016**

Good afternoon, Senator Gerratana, Representative Dillon, Senator Formica, Representative Betts and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jill Spineti and I am the president of The Governor's Prevention Partnership.

I'm here today to ask for your support to keep the state's prevention infrastructure intact so that our young people can grow and thrive in nurturing families and communities.

For more than 26 years, our non-profit organization has brought critical resources to schools, parents, law enforcement, community organizations, school leaders, and youth so that Connecticut's youth can grow up free from substance abuse, underage drinking, violence, and bullying, and to ensure they have a caring adult in their lives in order to grow to their fullest potential. We are a convener, an innovator, and a catalyst for change, a funder, a thought leader and an advocate. We provide new and cutting edge approaches and support to our partners so that they may implement the most effective programs.

I am joined by many of our program partners today from across the state: a mentoring provider who is part of the newly launched New Haven Mentoring Collaborative; a multi-service agency from New Britain who works with children and families whose lives have been traumatized; and, members of our team, all who do this work on a day-to-day basis who are themselves community leaders, parents, and experts in prevention.

As a public-private partnership, we have been fortunate that the General Assembly and DMHAS have been leaders on prevention ó thank you for your support. The dollars that The Partnership receives from state government are met 100% by private, corporate investments.

As you look at adjustments to the biennium budget, I urge you to support The Partnership and other youth prevention initiatives at the maximum funding possible.

For years, we have been doing more with less.

We launched the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Mentoring Network serving youth in the juvenile justice system of care with the ultimate goal of reducing recidivism; we created the first-of-its-kind youth led All-Abilities Alliance to improve school climate for youth with disabilities; and, we developed the E3 peer-to-peer initiative, an approach to prevent underage drinking, impaired driving, and youth substance abuse.

I am here today on behalf of eighteen year old Ronnie Cadogan, who is a recent graduate of Hartford High and participated in the RiseUP Group's mentoring program, he was here a few weeks ago to advocate for continued funding for mentoring in Connecticut; I am here representing Sean Steinlein who communicates only through eye movements and his computer, who was able to return to school because of the accepting environment offered at Woodstock Academy which was the pilot site of the All-Abilities Alliance; I am here representing Carter Barnhart, a young woman who is 6.5 years sober, who has dedicated her life to giving back to other youth who are also suffering as the clinical outreach coordinator at the treatment center Newport Academy; and I am here today on behalf of the countless other youth who rely on programs like ours across the state.

Through the leadership of this committee, this past fall we were able to grant dollars to ten mentoring programs across the state through the Connecticut Mentoring Fund, a public-private fund that distributed grants through a competitive RFP process. With the \$71,000 in award funding, an additional 374 youth are being served and close to 100 new mentors have been recruited with an anticipated 85 additional mentors over the next six months.

Right now with the heroin epidemic on the rise across the state, one in three Connecticut youth who need a mentor don't have one, and another one in four youth reported being bullied at school in the last year, there perhaps has never been a greater need for the prevention community. No one else is poised to tackle these problems as the first line of defense.

Our vision for the future is to bring our programs to scale so that **every school, every community group and every family feels supported and every child is connected.**

In the days ahead, I ask for your continued financial support. In order to be the active, timely, nimble organization that continues to stay out in front of issues, we must take strong confident steps towards innovation today. We must expand our capacity, and we can only do that through your continued support.

Thank you.

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