



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION



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February 18, 2016

Senator Beth Bye
Representative Toni E. Walker
Appropriations Committee
Legislative Office Building Room 2700
Hartford CT, 06106

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Mui Mui Hin-McCormick
Legislative Analyst
Alok Bhatt

Testimony Opposing H.B. No. 5044 An Act Making Adjustments To State Expenditures For The Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017

Dear Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and honorable members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Mui Mui Hin-McCormick, I am the Executive Director of Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission (APAAC). I also serve on multiple boards and coalitions; in particular the North Central Regional Mental Health Board and Chair of the Catchment Area Council (CAC) 23. CAC's offer a common ground for consumers, family members, and providers to work together in support of their communities. On behalf of the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission and the North Central Regional Mental Health Board I am submitting testimony opposing the H.B. No. 5044 regarding the proposed DMHAS cuts that would eliminate the Regional Mental Health Boards (RMHB).

Similar to other agencies, these RMHBs have limited funding and resources; welcoming opportunities to collaborate with agencies and communities. These agencies also share common goals of addressing disparities in underserved communities.

For over 40 years RMHBs have evaluated hundreds of programs, assessed the needs of the community, been the voice for the community and influenced the mental health and addictions service system continuously. The RMHBs produce results and touch thousands of lives on a low budget. With an average of 2 staff members each, and about 500 dedicated volunteers across the state, RMHBs make a difference for individuals, families, and systems. The RMHBs represent an impressive return on investment. The \$584,000 in state funding to the RMHBs helps bring in \$23 million in federal funding for mental health and addiction services.

NCRMHB is one of five regional mental health boards established by the Connecticut General Assembly in 1974 to study local needs, evaluate state funded mental health programs and make recommendations to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), local providers, and government officials for improved and/or expanded services. NCRMHB seeks to involve consumers of behavioral health services (local citizens living with mental health or substance use disorders, family members, and others who know and care about them) in its review, evaluation, and advocacy activities.

In my previous work as a clinical director of a community based outpatient program, I know firsthand about the existing barriers providers are challenged with on a daily basis. There is so much more work that needs to be done in all of our diverse

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communities when it comes to mental health and addiction issues. The work can't be done with the restricted funding and lack of resources. This is why, the RMHBs are needed in our communities as they are not only a resource but an advocate for those that are not able to advocate for themselves.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony. I hope you strongly consider reinstating funds for the Mental Health Regional Boards as they are critical supporters of our diverse communities; focused on improving the quality of life for all of our Connecticut residents, valuing the skills and experience of each person.

Sincerely,

Mui Mui Hin-McCormick
Executive Director
Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission

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