

**Testimony Submitted to the Appropriations Committee:**

**H.B. No. 5044 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2017**

**DMHAS Regional Action Council Funding  
February 18, 2016 Subcommittee on Health Public Hearing**

**Submitted By: Wendy Bentivegna**

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Gerratana and Representative Dillon, my name is Wendy Bentivegna and I am the Grant Director at Positive Directions, the Center for Prevention and Counseling, in Westport, CT. I am here today to strongly oppose the grave cuts to Regional Action Councils that will decimate the current prevention network structure.

As the co-chair of my Local Prevention Council, the Fairfield Cares Community Coalition (FC), as well as the Director of the Fairfield County Alliance to Prevent Substance Abuse (FCA-PSA, a tri-community collaboration), I have been fortunate to work with and have the support of 3 RACs in Fairfield County. These coalitions are collaborative efforts among a wide variety of local youth serving organizations and community stakeholders who work to reduce underage drinking and substance use through prevention education, and to bring programs that foster positive youth development.

The RAC Directors provide invaluable support in a variety of ways. They keep us informed of the latest drug trends; coordinate, facilitate and pay for the Search Institute's Youth Attitudes and Behaviors Survey and the reports that community groups use to inform their efforts, including the *Community Readiness Assessment for Substance Use Prevention*, the *Priority Setting Regional Profile* and contribute to the *Priority Services Report for Mental Health & Addiction Services*; provide technical assistance and trainings for coalition and community members. Without the RAC's support, both financial and technical, the survey would not be conducted and we would lose valuable data. This data is critical to our prevention work as it identifies our youth's strengths and areas of concern, allowing us to focus our efforts and to evaluate our programs and their effectiveness. Further, this data is a key component of the State grant process which helps fund much of our prevention work.

For these reasons, as well as many others, I urge you to oppose the Governor's proposed cuts to the combined block grant "Agency Operations" account at DMHAS, specifically as they relate to the Regional Action Councils.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these important services and supports.

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