

*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.

Public Hearing Date: February 18, 2016

Submitted By: Genevieve Porter Eason, Wilton, CT

Re: Proposed cuts to Regional Mental Health Boards

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Genevieve Porter Eason. I serve the Southwest Regional Mental Health Board as a member of both the Board of Directors and one of the Catchment Area Councils. I write to you today to testify on the budget.

I am opposed to the proposed cuts to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, in particular the Regional Mental Health Boards. The Regional Mental Health Boards are uniquely positioned to provide valuable services to our community.

Southwest Regional Mental Health Board (SWRMHB) serves as an important hub for disseminating information within the mental health community in Fairfield County. Though the Catchment Area Councils, as well as other committees and coalitions, we have built a network of consumers and providers who share insight and expertise and are able to mobilize on major initiatives. Providers have the opportunity to network, and consumers can access a wide array of resources. Information on programs, services and events are shared countywide. This access to information and collaboration is invaluable as providers attempt to care for the mentally ill and their families with increasingly limited resources.

Additionally, SWRMHB has a robust education and awareness program. Each fall we conduct mental health screenings across the county. In 2015 we screened over 1,000 individuals in 14 towns. Of the people screened, 24% scored at risk and were referred to treatment. Had we not made screening accessible to them, those 244 people might not have sought treatment. We also make resources, presentations, and training such as Mental Health First Aid and QPR Suicide Prevention available to local organizations and the public.

These are just two examples of SWRMHB's impact. There are many more. No other organization has the capacity to connect so many agencies, providers, consumers and volunteers within our region. Regional Mental Health Boards in other parts of the state are engaged in the same type of important work. I urge you to ensure that these crucial services continue to be available to the residents of Connecticut.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Genevieve Porter Eason

37 Dudley Road

Wilton, Connecticut 06897