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

*Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services- Regional Action Council Funding
February 18, 2016 Appropriations Subcommittee on Health Public Hearing*

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Gerratana and Representative Dillon, my name is Daun Barrett and I am the Director of Community Outreach & Parish Nursing at Griffin Hospital. I am here today to strongly oppose the grave cuts to regional action councils that will decimate the current prevention network structure.

The Valley Parish Nurses are urging you to restore the proposed funding cuts to the Regional Action Council's. BHcare's Greater Valley Substance Abuse Action Council (GVSAAC) provides vital prevention services to our communities. They are very active and engaged in many initiatives that work to improve the behavioral health systems and prevent substance abuse, suicide and improve mental wellness. For the past 25 years, they have conducted community and school assessments that outline critical behavioral health issues and work in collaboration to address identified issues.

GVSAAC provides valuable resources such as nurse and medical staff trainings, student and parent programs, technical assistance, curriculum development, and capacity building. They have been in the forefront of the opioid epidemic since 2010. Last year they held two successful forums with an opioid workgroup being formed as the outcome. This workgroup has worked hand in hand with the community to advocate and enhance prevention messages to help end the epidemic. In addition, the "Drug Trends", "Mental Health First Aid Trainings", and "Suicide Prevention Trainings" have enhanced the skills of my parish nurses to better serve our communities.

In addition, they have held sub-regional planning meetings that identified gaps in the substance abuse and mental health services in our region. These initiatives help our communities plan and address gaps and barriers in services.

We recognize that this budget session is difficult but the small amount of funding the Regional Action Council's receives impacts the entire continuum of care from behavioral health services including prevention, treatment, and recovery, having an overall impact on people in need. We know that prevention and early intervention saves lives. I ask you to remember that the small investment we make in prevention, we save much more in healthcare costs. If we did not have the Greater Valley Substance Abuse Action Council in our community, we would not be informed or equipped to address the current opioid epidemic. They are crucial in linking together key community partners to address substance abuse and behavioral health issues.

Respectfully Submitted,

Daun Barrett

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Director, Community Outreach / Valley Parish Nurse Program

