

State of Connecticut Appropriations Committee

February 18, 2016

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

Marijane Mitchell

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Marijane Mitchell and I have worked in Public Health for over forty years at the local and state levels. I have seen how important Public Health is in the lives of all of the people and how serious the repercussions can be when these life-supporting services are not available.

Suggested budget cuts to the state's Department of Public Health programs are a bad idea, so I am here to speak against HB No. 5044.

Investments in the Public health of our citizens provide significant returns on the investment, not to mention the savings from human suffering and illness that arise when health programs are cut.

Immunizations, for example, are a small cost to prevent expensive, sometimes deadly disease. Cuts to this program are short-sighted and don't factor in the long-term savings of avoided illnesses, hospitalizations or even death that can occur when infants and others of all ages are not afforded the protection of vaccines.

Many successful programs that were developed as "safety nets" for the poor and most vulnerable populations such as Children with Special Health Care Needs programs, Community Health Centers, School-based Health Centers and AIDS programs provide prevention, early detection of disease and treatments keeping people well and able to reach their potential to be successful students, parents and hard-working contributors to society. Sick and impaired individuals not only suffer needlessly, they also need more services and are not able to work and be self-supporting.

Cuts to Local and District Departments of Health have serious impacts on our local communities. These agencies keep our restaurants safe by regular inspections, training food service workers and investigating suspected foodborne outbreaks. They monitor drinking water and beaches to be sure local residents are safe. Local health inspectors also enforce the state's Public Health Code. If residents have to wait without heat, or live with serious mold or rat problems until the small departmental staff is able to get to them, the totally avoidable consequences can be serious. Local health departments also have a key role to play in the event of bioterrorism. Funding of these agencies is vital to keep our residents safe and healthy.

Thank you for your time and your thoughtful consideration.

Marijane Mitchell, 47 Corrina Lane, Salem CT