Testimony for Appropriations Committee
Health Subcommittee
Public Hearing re: HB 7148 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNium ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2021, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREOF

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Governor’s Partnership to Protect Connecticut’s Workforce, Inc.
DBA The Governor’s Prevention Partnership
March 1, 2019

Good afternoon Senator Bradley, Representative Dillon, Representative Petit and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jill Spineti and I am the president of The Governor’s Prevention Partnership, a statewide youth prevention organization that receives support from DMHAS. I am here today to ask for your support to keep the state’s prevention infrastructure intact so that our young people can grow and thrive in nurturing families and communities.

The Governor’s Prevention Partnership is celebrating its 30th anniversary in the prevention field. Our focus is to promote strong, healthy communities and positive school climates and increase positive relationships with adults. We do this by preventing underage drinking and substance abuse, bullying, and violence, and promoting mentoring through effective, science-based intervention and prevention strategies.

We have been fortunate to have had the resources to evolve over the last three decades to meet the changing needs of Connecticut’s young people. Every governor, regardless of political affiliation, has served as our co-chair along with a Connecticut business leader and a number of other business leaders on our Board of Directors. We leverage the state’s investment with private funding from businesses and both public and private grants. We receive approximately $500,000 from DMHAS and raised close to $2.5 million in additional funding. Attached to my submitted testimony is a list of those other public and private partners who supported youth prevention in Connecticut in 2018, as well as a breakdown of our funding sources.

We are focused on the future of Connecticut by ensuring that young people are able to assume their places in our workforce and are not derailed by the many threats that face them.

We help youth find their voice and promote youth leadership opportunities with the DMHAS funded Youth Leadership Advisory Council, which is a diverse group of about 25 high school and college-aged people from across the state who are using their voices to create campaigns to prevent things like underage vaping in their communities. This kind of peer-led approach is effective for those who are leading it to their own personal growth and to generate the necessary buy-in from their peers for the messages to stick.

We continue to keep our eye on the effects that the opioid epidemic is having in our state. We are working with our network of more than 50 existing business partners to facilitate workplace engagement sessions to raise awareness and capacity of adults so they have the skills they need to prevent the young people in their lives from segueing to opioid misuse.
Parents are the strongest influencers their children have; by providing them with the confidence and knowledge they need they are able to play a pivotal role in prevention. Another program we have created focuses on the prevention of underage substance misuse among Latino youth in Hartford by empowering parents and families with skills and confidence, so they are able to influence their children’s behaviors. Currently in its third year, the project has shown impressive results. In 2018, 87% of parents who went through the program reported increased confidence in talking to their children about drugs and alcohol. We are now pursuing enhancements for this project to bring it to other cultural and geographic communities.

Our work continues to address chronic absenteeism in Hartford with our EdCorpsCT project. With the largest achievement gap in the country and chronic absenteeism being a predictor for many future academic failures including high dropout rates, we saw a need that was not being met. Thanks to AmeriCorps funding through the Connecticut Commission on Community Service, Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield, Cigna and others, the project pairs 10 full-time mentors with 100 students in Hartford’s Northend Promise Zone to focus on academic improvement, classroom support, and family engagement. Now in its third year, the program is developing best practices and tools that can be shared with other school districts.

The Partnership oversees the Juvenile Justice Mentoring Network with additional support from the Connecticut Judicial Branch – Court Support Services Division. The Partnership has secured an additional $1.2 million over the next two years to practice the new and emerging strategy of using natural mentors to serve youth in the system.

As you consider the many worthy programs and investments the State of Connecticut makes, please consider this: **an investment in prevention makes the biggest impact at the lowest cost.**

All our work is done through partnership whether with schools, community programs or corporations – we are joined today by some of those who make our work successful – you’ll hear from Monique Price-Taylor, one of our program managers who oversees our peer-to-peer work and Haddiyyah Ali, one of our AmeriCorps members who focuses her term to reduce chronic absenteeism; you have also received written testimony from students from Kolbe High School in Bridgeport who weren’t able to be here tonight but wanted to share the value they see in our programming.

As a public-private partnership, we have been fortunate that the General Assembly and DMHAS have been leaders in youth prevention – thank you for your vision and commitment. As they say, every dollar invested in prevention results in $10 in societal savings.

**I urge you to support The Partnership at the maximum funding possible.**

In the days and months ahead, I ask for your continued financial support. In order to be an active, timely, nimble organization that continues to address critical issues facing our youth, we must take strong confident steps towards innovation today. We must continue to expand our capacity, and we can only do that through your continued support.

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