WATERBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Joseph R. Gorman – Supervisor (203) 574-8051 email: jgorman@waterbury.k12.ct.us

Health. Moves. Minds.

Testimony for Public Hearing - Appropriations Committee
February 18, 2016

IN SUPPORT OF REGIONAL ACTION COUNCILS

My name is Joe Gorman. I am the Supervisor of Health and Physical Education for the Waterbury Public Schools and I represent the Mayor's Task Force Against Substance Abuse in the City of Waterbury. I urge you to **OPPOSE** the currently proposed 79% budget reduction to regional action councils (RACs), and encourage full restoration of current RAC funding moving forward. In its present form, the proposed effectively defunds all thirteen regional action councils from $1.1 million to slightly less than $230,000. It would surely decimate the current system of regional action councils, and severely impact the volunteer "boots on the ground" in our communities that rely so heavily upon them to deliver meaningful prevention services.

As you are aware, the Connecticut Prevention Network (CPN) is comprised of the state's 13 community partnership Regional Action Councils (RACs) that work to provide every community in the state with education, training, and advocacy for substance abuse prevention and related community concerns such as behavioral health, violence, gambling, drunk driving, prescription drugs, opioid addiction and suicide.

In Waterbury alone, our regional action council, the Central Naugatuck Valley Regional Action Council (CNVRAC), has served as an integral and irreplaceable partner in the development of the following initiatives:

- Promotion & coordination of comprehensive youth risk behavior and resiliency surveys conducted with all students in grades 6-12 throughout Waterbury Public Schools
- Promotion & coordination of district-wide youth-led analyses of local-level risk and protective factors affecting adolescent substance use, education, risk of suicide, bullying, safety, and other areas affecting health and wellness of young people
- Coordination and development of local-level Drug Endangered Child (DEC) Alliances between Waterbury Police Department, Department of Children & Families, and the statewide DEC office

- Promotion & Coordination of DEC training for Waterbury Law Enforcement, School Administration and Pupil Personnel Services Staff, area social service agencies, probation, parole, DCF Caseworkers, and other related professionals
- Coordination of a permanent Medication Drop Box installation at Waterbury Police Department and ongoing promotion of this cost-effective opioid deterrence measure
- Professional Development for teachers and Bridge To Success service agency staff provided on 40 Developmental Assets for Youth; Opioid Abuse Prevention Forum; Financial Wellness for Seniors and Problem Gambling Prevention Across the Lifespan; Local Prevention Council "101"; Local Prevention Council Capacity Building; Local Prevention Council TA: Prevention Strategies & Effective Service Delivery and Mental Health First Aid training, among others.
- Development and dissemination of Opioid Overdose Wallet Cards to prevent opioid overdose deaths
- Coordination & Delivery of Innovative Media Campaigns on Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention
- Membership and Advisement to the Waterbury Bridge To Success Partnership
- Membership and Advisement to the Waterbury School Health and Wellness and Council
- Membership/Advisement to the Waterbury Support for Pregnant and Parenting Teens Advisory Council
- Contributing Partner to the Waterbury Public Schools Substance Abuse Prevention Curriculum Development Committee
- Contributing Partner to the Waterbury Public Schools PK-12 Health and Wellness Curriculum Revision Committee
- Contributing Partner to the Waterbury Health & Physical Education Research-Based Prevention Curriculum Selection Committee (resulted in acquisition/implementation of K -12 LifeSkills Developmental Curriculum)
- Organizational support to the Waterbury Youth Council
- Logistical support to the Waterbury "Teens Who Care" Foundation

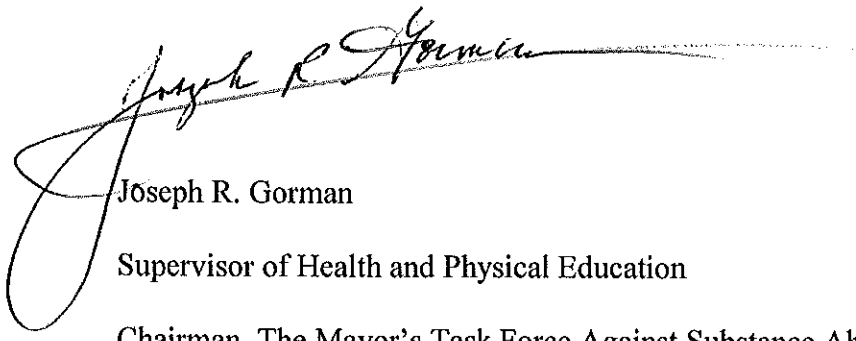
It should also be acknowledged that the activities of the Central Naugatuck Valley Regional Action Council were directly attributable to the award selections of Waterbury by the ING Foundation in 2012 and 2013 as one of America's Top 100 Communities for Youth.

In closing, I **OPPOSE** the proposed budget cuts under consideration. As an eleven (11) year volunteer Chairman of the Mayor's Task Force Against Substance Abuse, I rely heavily upon my RAC for the quality actionable research, resources and coordination of services I simply cannot generate independently given the scope of my other professional responsibilities. If you elect to surrender the elimination of regional action councils, countless important, proactive and cost-effective local prevention services will be lost state-wide and most certainly in Waterbury. Waterbury needs to preserve what fragile prevention infrastructure we have left, and we need, not want, the Central Naugatuck Valley Regional Action Council to help do that. I need the Central Naugatuck Valley Regional Action Council to help do that.

As the House Appropriations Committee, you have the power to avert this negative outcome. We look to you to be visionary, acknowledge our communities' prevention service needs, and act to preserve the tools to supply them.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours truly,



Joseph R. Gorman

Supervisor of Health and Physical Education

Chairman, The Mayor's Task Force Against Substance Abuse

City of Waterbury