



## **Testimony for Appropriations Committee Health Subcommittee**

**Public Hearing re: HB 5005, AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR  
THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2021**

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**Governor's Partnership to Protect Connecticut's Workforce, Inc.**

**DBA The Governor's Prevention Partnership**

**February 21, 2020**

Good evening distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. We are the interim co-leaders of The Governor's Prevention Partnership. I am Kelly Juleson-Scopino and this is my colleague Roland Harmon. We are here tonight to highlight DMHAS' investment in our organization and the impact prevention has on Connecticut's youth.

For 30 years, we have provided prevention services across the state to support Connecticut's youth, so they can thrive in their adult lives. We do this through a number of ways: we focus our efforts on preventing underage drinking and substance abuse, bullying and violence in schools, and promoting youth mentoring.

All our work is collaborative -- we enhance the work that is already being done in the communities you represent-- we build local and regional communities of practice, we facilitate diverse conversations, we work with schools to apply mentoring practices to help reduce chronic absenteeism, we find ways to amplify the powerful youth voice through the administration of DMHAS' Youth Advisory Board.

We do a lot with a little and we find a way to leverage everything we have. Last year alone, we secured an additional million dollars to enhance the state's investment. We were awarded a new federal grant to reach youth in New Haven to reduce opioid use. This will enhance our work with Hillhouse High School where we have paired students with adult mentors.

We are able to connect the dots to create partnerships. We are currently working on formalizing a new partnership with Yale to bring a gaming App to youth to prevent substance abuse and vaping.

We want to couple this with our *Connecting for Prevention* workshops that reach parents at work to train them how prevent opioid abuse with the children in their lives. We are giving adults tools to use to have conversations. It is estimated that having conversations with a young person about drugs and alcohol can reduce their risk of use by 50% (Partnership for Drug-Free Kids).

Personally, I found this training to be helpful: My five year old went to take a handful of fruit snacks and she told me she had to take 'her pills.' I asked her what she was talking about and she relayed that she was taking 'pills' like she sees her nearly seventy year old family member take every day. This provided an opportunity to have a very early, very real prevention



conversation with her about the things she puts into her body and about the importance of only taking things that are prescribed by a doctor.

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.** More than that though is that DMHAS makes smart investments that pair their grantees and partners together to make a greater impact on behalf of Connecticut's youth.

Every dollar invested in school-based substance abuse prevention programs has the potential to save up to \$18 in costs related to substance use disorders (*Miller, T.R., & Hendrie, D.(2009).Substance abuse prevention dollars and cents: A cost-benefit analysis Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. Rockville, MD: DHHS Pub. No (SMA) 07-4298*).

As a former legislator, I know that the struggle is real. You have so many worthy programs and investments to consider and a limited budget. If you had the ability today to save \$12 million in future costs, would you?

**We urge you to support The Partnership and the other youth organization in our state at the maximum funding possible.**

We are here to work with you and your communities. We may be a small organization, but we are fierce and ready to support your communities with greater prevention services and resources for the betterment of our children.

Thank you for your time.

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