

Robert McDade Jr.
1042 Poquonnock Rd #60
Groton, CT 06340
HB #5005: AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2021 –
February 21, 2020
RE: **Testimony for Appropriations Committee Governor's Proposed Budget Adjustments**

Hello My name is Robert McDade Jr. (RJ) and I'm the youth peer advocate with the Groton Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention (GASP) in Groton, CT. I am writing this testimony to ask for support of HB#5005 AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2021 which supports The Governor's Prevention Partnership through the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

I have been serving as GASP's Youth Peer Advocate for over 2 years. As an advocate, I have had the privilege of serving on the State Youth Advisory Board. I have met so many great people from different towns that are committed to making a difference like I am. I know that the Governor's Prevention Partnership and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services are responsible for making that happen. It was offered to me as an opportunity to work on my leadership skills and public speaking skills that are important as I start looking at careers. I have a lot of anxiety, and this has been a great place for me to grow and develop important skills while feeling comfortable and supported.

I also feel very strongly that prevention work and programming is important in changing youth perceptions about drugs and alcohol. So many teens think drugs and alcohol are OK to use even when they know how it affects the body and mind. Youth often want to be like their friends and fit into groups that use drugs and alcohol, so they get peer pressured into using drugs and alcohol. Some of the activities I have been involved in is the development and promotion of campaigns with magnets and posters that are put all over schools to educate students on the harms of drug and alcohol use, and raise awareness of the fact that most teens don't use drugs or drink. I know what I am doing is making a difference. The choices we make now can impact our future.

We need to prioritize prevention so we put a stop to the sad stories that we keep hearing about.

I would like to thank you for your support regarding this issue and I hope that you will choose to continue funding and supporting The Governor's Prevention Partnership so that prevention continues to be a priority in Connecticut and that young people like me can have a big voice in prevention across the State.

Respectfully,

Robert McDade Jr., Youth Peer Advocate (Groton)