

**Testimony for Appropriations Committee
Health Subcommittee**

**Public Hearing re: H.B. No. 6439 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING
THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE
THIRTIETH, 2023**

Bianca Arias

On Behalf of The Governor's Prevention Partnership

March 2, 2021

To the members of the committee, hello, my name is Bianca Arias. I am 18 years old and a current senior at The Morgan School in Clinton. Although this is my first time testifying, I am very well versed in the world of prevention.

I recently received the 2020 Connecticut Youth Services Association's Youth Leadership Award for my prevention efforts at local, statewide and national levels. As the president of our local substance use prevention youth group, I often lead campaigns to educate others. This is why I'm here today, to ask you to continue funding prevention organizations and agencies at the maximum amount possible.

The support of prevention is very important to our communities and is what got many of us through these tough times. I have attended both Youth 2 Youth and CADCA National Conferences so I can bring prevention knowledge back to my community.

Prevention works. Underage marijuana use in Clinton has decreased almost 20% since the introduction of a prevention coordinator in the town, which doesn't sound like a coincidence to me. My volunteer work recently led to a paid peer assistant position under Clintons prevention coordinator, Kelley Edwards. This opened an opportunity

to analyze data and present to Clinton's town council and town manager about the recent student survey about drug and alcohol use trends in high school students.

One of the most influential experiences for me has been working alongside other motivated youth as a member of the youth advisory board for The Governor's Prevention Partnership. I continue to keep in touch with peers from other towns in hopes to work alongside their coalitions so we can bring our prevention experience to a statewide level. These connections and varying perspectives drive this work. I ask that you consider continued funding of The Governor's Prevention Partnership, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and our prevention councils.

