



FUND SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PREVENTION

Testimony of the Connecticut Prevention Network

In regards to

H.B. No. 6439 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023,
AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Appropriations Subcommittee on Health, March 2, 2021

Senator Osten, Representative Walker and Members of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Health, thank you for the opportunity today to testify on HB6439- An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2023, And Making Appropriations Therefor.

The CT Prevention Network (CPN) consists of 5 regional entities known as the Regional Behavioral Health Action Organizations (RBHAOs) and other like-minded prevention focused organizations. **We are urging you to fund regional behavioral health action organizations in the state budget.**

The RBHAOs provide assistance in developing regional strategic plans that provide recommendations for prevention, treatment and recovery services and administer the Local Prevention Council (LPC) grants to municipalities to stimulate the development and implementation of prevention activities. They are critical in building the capacity of local communities to understand and address substance abuse, mental health, problem gambling and suicide prevention.

Currently, the state does not fund this prevention work and instead the five RBHAOs are funded via federal grant dollars through the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. The grants have required contractual obligations. In prior years, the state devoted over \$1.5 million to the former Regional Action Councils and Regional Mental Health Boards. This funding was phased out in the last few years and instead our funding is through federal waiver dollars provided to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. The money must be spent based on a contract with the Department and subject to the federal waiver requirements.

Sustainable funding for prevention is a major gap in the current Connecticut infrastructure. Long term planning and support for prevention is critical to reducing the social impacts related to addiction and mental health. RBHAOs are charged with the responsibility to work with local communities and build their capacity to promote mental health and prevent substance misuse. This includes creating awareness through education but also includes becoming recovery friendly communities who care for their residents in emotional distress, knowledgeable about community and treatment resources, able to address local gaps and barriers, and refer people to formal treatment as needed.

Initial discussions with our communities who are responding to their residents struggling with increased anxiety and/or depression in our new world of COVID, reveal that many of their residents are not ready for or in need of formal treatment, but need a supportive community able to listen and respond to their multi-faceted needs. It is one of the roles of the RBHAO to help communities identify those needs and build capacity to address them while also making sure they are aware of formal treatment resources and refer people as needed.

We have also seen increasing numbers of overdoses and substance abuse throughout the state. **It is imperative that Connecticut reinvigorates this community infrastructure to ensure the well-being of our residents during these challenging times!**