

**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**

**Deborah Lake
The Governor's Prevention Partnership
March 2, 2021**

Good day, distinguished members of the appropriations committee. I am Deborah Lake, Director of Program Planning and Implementation at The Governor's Prevention Partnership. We are a statewide youth prevention organization focused on supporting parents, programs, and communities with the best strategies and resources to provide Connecticut's young people with the tools they need to make good decisions. I am here today in support of prevention work through the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

One of the best aspects of my work is being involved in the statewide youth advisory board, supported by DMHAS and local coalitions. The young people involved show leadership in their local communities through peer-to-peer prevention work. This work may include educational campaigns, trainings around how to reduce risky behavior, ways to support your mental health, or offer access to a positive social group. As demonstrated in a recent research study conducted between October and December 2020 in Connecticut, these youth-led systems are essential.

Connecticut youth are facing so many challenges, including increased access to alcohol. We know that overall alcohol sales have increased more than 50% since 2019, and internet alcohol sales have increased 291%. Our

desire for contactless delivery means that packages now arrive on doorsteps without any interaction between the consumer and the deliverer.

According to the Connecticut research, youth believe both their own and their peers' use of alcohol resulted, in part, from easier access at home compared to other substances. Many young people reported that because their parents were drinking more at home, alcohol was more readily accessible to them, with or without their parent's permission. Several young people commented that they were drinking, not as they did pre-COVID for "partying," but at home, often alone out of "boredom."

We have the opportunity to support our young people in reducing and preventing underage drinking. Using peers as prevention messengers and focusing on their mental health, well-being, and coping strategies can increase the likelihood a young person chooses healthy behaviors. The prevention work done by our organization and the many other statewide and local organizations supported by DMHAS, is a critical way in which to ensure the continued health and success of Connecticut's young people.

I want to thank you for your support regarding this issue. I hope that you will choose to continue funding and supporting prevention organizations, such as The Governor's Prevention Partnership, for the future health of our state.