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APR 22 2013

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Testimony Ingrid Gillespie, President of the Connecticut Prevention Network

Proposed Regulations for Palliative Use of Marijuana
Department of Consumer Protection, April 20, 2013 Public Hearing

Commissioner Rubenstein, I submit this testimony for your review on behalf of the Connecticut Prevention Network (CPN) which is the Association of Regional Substance Abuse Action Councils. Our main concern with the medical marijuana program is ensuring that marijuana is only available to those who are medically prescribed it and does not get into the hands of youth and young adults. In states that have legalized medical marijuana, evidence has shown that rates of this drug amongst youth and abuse/dependence rates are almost twice as high as states without such laws (Wall M, et al. 2011. Ann Epidemiol; Cerda M, et al. 2012. Drug Alcohol Depend).

To minimize the potential for this effect in Connecticut, CPN proposes using its existing infrastructure of its thirteen Regional Councils that support 139 Local Prevention Councils (LPCs) to create a coordinated education and awareness campaign over a two year period. CPN responsibilities would include:

- Creating state-wide PSAs and printed materials on medical marijuana regulations that are culturally competent and age sensitive.
- Developing and coordinating presentations on medical marijuana regulations for the 12 sectors represented on Regional Action Councils.
- Provide an annual written summation of challenges with respect to implementing the medical marijuana regulations. This report will be submitted to the Department of Consumer Protection as overseers of the regulations, and to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services as the state department overseeing substance abuse prevention and addiction services.
- Ensuring dissemination of where and how to access treatment for drug addiction.

These proposed strategies for an educational awareness campaign for medical marijuana regulations are based on the abundant empirical evidence regarding effectiveness of tobacco prevention programs (Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids) that include use of PSAs and presentations to numerous community groups. Thus, there is every reason to expect that a similar program to educate about medical marijuana regulations will also be effective. While we have other concerns with how the program will be implemented, it will be of the utmost importance to ensure that there is an education and prevention program in place.

Thank you and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Submitted by:

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