



To: Senate Health and Welfare Committee

From: Prevention Works! Vermont

Date: April 11, 2024

Re: Vermont Prevention Lead Funding Cut

Dear Chair Lyons and members of the Senate Health and Welfare Committee,

Prevention Lead funding has been substantially cut in the current working budget [as passed by the House](#). This is a brief overview of the current budget issues presented by [H. 883](#) and its impact on prevention programming statewide. This letter is written on behalf of Vermont prevention lead organizations who have been selected by the state to lead this work.

Context:

1. In 2022, [Act 185](#) appropriated \$3,000,000 to DSU (formerly ADAP) for a grant to the substance Misuse Prevention Coalitions. Specifically, this bill stated that “it is the intent of the General Assembly that funding for the Substance Misuse Prevention Coalitions be funded with one-time general funds until funds from the cannabis excise tax revenues pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 7909 become available” (p. 93).
2. In 2023, [Act 78](#) appropriated 1.4M in base funding for coalitions, and 1.59M in one-time funds in anticipation of cannabis tax excise funds. These funds were to be used in a manner consistent with the Substance Misuse Prevention Coalition funding intent as stated in Act 185. This amount totaled 3 million.
3. Currently, [H. 883](#) appropriates \$795,000 of opioid abatement funds to DSU for prevention coalition funding. This replaces the \$1.59M additional base general fund appropriation in the Governor’s recommended budget. The changed amount of \$795k is added to base general funds of 1,410,000, totaling \$2,205,000. This amounts to a significant cut of \$795,000 to the substance misuse prevention coalition funding.

Issues:

- The proposed cut of \$795,000 will substantially impact Prevention Lead Organizations, resulting in the loss of coalition programming and a significant reduction in grant awards currently supporting community-based projects.
- Opioid abatement funds were never part of the initial strategy to fund substance misuse prevention coalitions.

- **This language does not fulfill the original intent of Act 185** both in terms of funding amount (3 million), and funding mechanism (one-time general funds until cannabis excise tax revenue is available).
- 30% of the excise tax is approximately \$5.7M; as such, the legislature is not currently meeting its obligation to use 30% of the cannabis excise tax on prevention, **violating Act 62 of 2021**.

#### Why This Matters

- An independent cost-benefit analysis was facilitated in 2024 assessing the impact of Vermont state-funded prevention work, and specifically the work of prevention coalitions. The analysis found that **for every dollar invested in substance use prevention in Vermont, a savings of \$7.03 in public burden spending is realized**.
- Four Vermont Prevention Lead Organizations (VPLOs or “Prevention Leads”) were established in FY 24 to facilitate prevention work statewide using 3M in identified state funding. These entities serve as fiscal agents working within a regional structure to allocate substance misuse prevention funding and support data-driven prevention initiatives that meet the needs of distinct communities. This activity was specifically funded through the above-described 3M. This funding and structure:
  - Addresses disparities in Vermont’s substance misuse prevention system that included geographical gaps and unserved or underserved populations.
  - Leverages both state and federal funding streams to fill gaps and expand access to prevention statewide.
  - Coordinates, aligns, influences, supports, and leverage substance misuse prevention efforts at the community, regional and state levels.
  - Builds additional capacity in both primary and secondary prevention and engages non-traditional partners (universal prevention and identifying at-risk and special populations that need a more targeted approach).

Each of these activities are at risk of being cut should the budget pass in its current form. This is particularly important as these are newly established programs created to bridge gaps in our continuum of care. This work has just begun and the impact is yet to be realized across our communities. We urge you to consider the impact this will have on prevention programming statewide.

Sincerely,

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