



DATE: March 14, 2022
TO: Public Health Committee
FROM: Ben Shaiken, Director of Government Relations, The Alliance
RE: H.B. 5419 An Act Concerning the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services' Recommendations Regarding Regional Behavioral Health Action Organizations.

Good afternoon Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, Senator Somers, Senator Hwang, Representative Petit and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Ben Shaiken, Director of Government Relations at the Connecticut Community Nonprofit Alliance (The Alliance). The Alliance is the statewide organization representing nonprofits. Nonprofits deliver essential services to more than half a million people each year and employ 115,000 across Connecticut.

The Alliance supports H.B. 5419 An Act Concerning the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services' Recommendations Regarding Regional Behavioral Health Action Organizations, which adds statutory language to define the Regional Behavioral Health Action Organizations, or "RBHAOs."

RBHAOs were created from the consolidation of the Regional Action Council (RAC) and Regional Mental Health Board (RMHB) system. What had been six RMHBs and 15 RACs merged into five new RBHAOs. Traditionally, RMHBs and RACs served many functions. They provided important independent oversight over both the State and private providers, provided a space for people with lived experience and their families to advocate and have input in the design of the behavioral health system, were local administrators of prevention programs, and provided critical community input necessary for a myriad of federal funding opportunities.

The roles and responsibilities of the RACs and RMHBs were set by the legislature--the RACs in Chapter 319j section 17a-671 and the RMHBs in Chapter 319i section 17a-484. Currently, the RBHAOs authority is set in their contracts with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. While that relationship is important and collaborative, The Alliance requests the legislature provide statutory authority to these new entities consistent with that of their predecessors.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.