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Appropriations and Human Services Committees Public Hearing Testimony  
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Good afternoon Chairs and Committee Members. My name is Julie Peters and I am the Executive Director of the Brain Injury Association of Connecticut. I find myself in a very difficult position. As the lead agency in Connecticut on all things related to brain injury, we, of course, support additional slots for the ABI Medicaid Waiver Program. However, the Department of Social Services is requesting to reserve those slots for individuals participating in the Money Follows the Person Demonstration. **If you pass this legislation as currently written, this committee will be responsible for forcing individuals to be institutionalized in order to access home and community based service in a timely manner.**

Restricting the slots to those individuals is unfair to the 50 people who are currently on the waiting list for the ABI Waiver, some of whom have been on it for more than two years. Due to lack of attrition on the ABI Waiver, without new slots for these individuals, these 50 people have little hope of receiving the services they need to be participating members of the community.

The proposed slots are critical, but not sufficient. The MFP demonstration requires that individuals be currently institutionalized. The 25 active MFP participants will need to transfer to the ABI Waiver once the demonstration is complete. **This would circumvent the entire waitlist of individuals who are not currently institutionalized, but are equally entitled.** Serving these individuals is still costing state and local municipalities money and resources through unnecessary ER visits, incarceration, and inappropriate inpatient psychiatric stays, not to mention the emotional cost on their families.

Over two years ago, I came to the Appropriations Committee with the story of a young Simsbury man who was living at a rehabilitation institution in New Hampshire wanting to return home. He was finally able to do so, one month before MFP began. In a cruel twist, he came home to his family only to learn that he was deemed ineligible for the MFP program because he was no longer institutionalized. Therefore, he has waited for over 2 years to get the services he desperately needs on the ABI Waiver.

The ABI Waiver was the first Medicaid-funded program in Connecticut that allowed individuals with acquired brain injuries to live in the community, and it did so ***while reducing state and federal Medicaid expenditures by providing services to the ABI population at an average of 75% of the cost of alternative institutional care.*** Simply put, this truly remarkable Program has not only made an incredible difference in lives of many families in Connecticut but has **saved the State money**, but it can only work if provided fairly and equitably.

***Everyone*** deserves the right to live safely in his or her own community. Without the equitable appropriation of additional funding for those with brain injuries, that right will never be a reality. Accordingly, we respectfully request that funding be added for 85 additional ABI Medicaid Waiver slots (50 for the waitlist and 35 for MFP).

Thank you.