

March 1, 2011  
Human Services Committee  
Carrie Kramer, on behalf of  
Julie Peters, Executive Director  
Brain Injury Association of Connecticut

Good afternoon Chairs and Committee Members. My name is Carrie Kramer and I am the Director of Brain Injury Services at the Brain Injury Association of Connecticut. I am here today representing our Executive Director, Julie Peters. Because of the very short notice given for this hearing, Ms. Peters was unable to change her schedule to attend. We are here today in support of HB 5893: An Act Concerning Home and Community-Based Services for Persons With Acquired Brain Injury.

This legislation would assure that those who are on the waitlist for the ABI Medicaid Waiver Program would have equal access to additional slots for the Waiver as those who participate in the Money Follows the Person demonstration project.

We spoke to this issue in October 2010, at a time when the Department of Social Services was requesting additional ABI Medicaid Waiver slots restricted to Money Follow the Person demonstration program participants. As we said at that time, restricting additional slots to MFP participants 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 current system in Connecticut forces individuals to be institutionalized in order to access home and community based services in a timely manner.** Serving individuals who are not institutionalized 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, we testified 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.

When we testified last fall, a frequent question from legislators was, "why should we invest state dollars in care when families are able to do it on their own"? The answer is that families cannot do it on their own and trying to do so has put both the survivor and the family at risk. One family who wished to attend this hearing today has a brother who has been on the waitlist for years. They could not come because they had to care for their brother and were out of money to pay for outside help. Caregivers are often elderly, don't have resources to effectively care for individuals, and often have homes which may not be accessible.

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 for **all** those with brain injuries, that right will never be a reality. Accordingly, we respectfully request that you pass HB 5893.

Thank you.