

March 28, 2014

Appropriations & Human Services Committees

**1915(C) Home and Community-based Services Waiver, CT
Acquired Brain Injury Waiver II Application.**

Good Afternoon distinguished members of the Appropriations & Human Services Committees. My name is Deb Shulansky and I am the Director of Community Outreach and Support at the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut (BIAC), as well as a member of the State of CT TBI Advisory Board.

While acknowledging that there are serious deficiencies in *SUBJECT MATTER: 1915(c) Home and Community-Based Services Waiver, CT Acquired Brain Injury Waiver II Application*, I categorically support any bill which is designed to reduce the time it takes for a person with a brain injury to receive services from the State and/or lessen the current 3-4 year waiting period for ABI Medicaid Waiver services.

As the Director of Community Outreach and Support, I oversee brain injury support groups through-out the State of Connecticut. A significant number of people in these support groups and with whom BIAC works are unable to receive the services they need in the community because they cannot access care. A shorter ABI Medicaid Waiver waiting list unequivocally will enable more brain injury survivors to access important services they need.

Mike Jennings, a brain injury survivor and member of the Board of Directors of the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut, is unable to be here in person to testify today, so he's asked me to relay the following testimony to you:

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"As a brain injury survivor, who spent 14 months in a rehab center followed by a nursing home, I can personally attest to how vitally important it is to have some independence. Because in a nursing home, most everything is done for you, it is easy to become too complacent. In my case, when I got out, I remember how getting my cereal for breakfast by myself was a gratifying accomplishment. My independence continued to grow, as for example I then took over organizing my daily medications.

Neither the ABI I or ABI II is perfect. However I truly feel that the change to expedite people getting the coverage is extremely important."

Mike Jennings, Simsbury, CT resident

Mr. Jennings' testimony is compelling and I encourage you to pass this legislation because he is correct, too many acquired brain injury survivors have been waiting for too many years to receive necessary services for an improved quality of life. In fact, to take this one step further, **all** individuals on the current ABI Medicaid Waiver waitlist (49 according to DSS) should be treated equally and the 50 slots reserved for DMHAS participants should be removed. **ALL** individuals who have been waiting for services should be served fairly, whether or not it saves the State dollars.

Thank you for your time,

Deb Shulansky