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Appropriations Committee Public Hearing Testimony

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Brain Injury Alliance of CT

Good evening Chairs and Appropriations Committee Members. My name is Melinda Montovani, and I am a Brain Injury Specialist, at the Brain Injury Alliance of CT (BIAC). I reside in the town of West Hartford. I am submitting this testimony in regard to **H.B. 5052**, AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS. I ask that you oppose this bill and commit to increase funding for the Brain Injury Alliance of CT and protect the grant that allows us to serve the community of individuals with brain injuries.

Governor Dannel Malloy, in a Press Release dated January 30, 2014 reported that CT currently has a surplus. He indicates, "CT has faced more than its share of challenges over the last few years. Now that things are beginning to improve, it's critical that everyone shares in the recovery." Everyone shares in the recovery except persons with brain injuries.

Governor Malloy openly shares that he has a disability, yet the fact that he would cut the line item in the budget for this very population seems to indicate he has lost touch with the needs and challenges that face people living with disabilities.

For almost 30 years, BIAC has received an operating grant (currently under the budget line "Services for Persons with Disabilities") from the Department of Social Services to provide resources and supports **which the State is unable to provide**. The cost to the state was just under **\$119,000** last year in spite of an increase in calls of over 600% to the Helpline.

I answer the **Helpline**, a toll free number accessed by survivors of brain injury, caregivers, friends, family, professionals, educators, veterans **and legislators** who are all looking for information on supports and services for individuals with brain injuries. For some, we are able to find an existing resource that will meet the individual's needs. However, for too many, the answer is no, CT does not fund that service, CT has a 4-5 year wait list for the Acquired Brain Injury Waiver, 'I'm sorry, you don't meet eligibility criteria for that program'. There is extremely limited funding for the population of individuals with brain injury and yet, the Governor estimates a surplus at approximately \$505 million dollars.

I recently had a call from a social worker at a large hospital working with a man who had sustained a brain injury. He was now ready to leave the hospital but required 24 hour supports for safety issues. The two home and community based programs that would offer the services he needed would be Money Follows the Person (MFP) and the Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Waiver. However, for MFP, he would need a qualifying stay in a skilled nursing facility of 3 months and then be put on a wait list and for the ABI Waiver, there is a 4-5 year wait for services. So the individual will remain in a costly acute care hospital setting at significant cost to the state. CT can and must do better than that. Instead, the Governor seeks to eliminate, the small pool of funds dedicated to those working with and providing services to this population.

I thank you for your support in the past. You voted to support us when the Governor thought it was wise to cut services for Persons with Disabilities. I am asking for your support again. Thank you for your time and your service to the state of CT.

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