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SB Bill 251: An Act Concerning Programs administered by the Department of Social Services
Tuesday, March 4, 2014 Human Services Committee

Dear Senator Slossberg, Representative Abercrombie and members of the Human Services Committee.

My name is Melinda Montovani and I am a Brain Injury Specialist at the Brain Injury Alliance of CT. I am testifying in support of Bill 251 which will address the issue of being improperly terminated from DSS benefits at time of redetermination. We have been receiving calls from survivors of brain injury and their family members who have submitted redetermination paperwork and had their benefits discontinued. When they try to call to follow up, they cannot get through to a live person at the end of the phone. Important medical appointments are not kept, and prescriptions cannot be obtained. This disruption to their ability to access health care leads to an increase in health costs down the road as symptoms that were being managed or maintained are now increased and exacerbated.

We are asking that there be a change to the computer default system which automatically terminates someone if DSS has not actually reviewed the redetermination form. The default should change so that if someone timely submits their redetermination form to DSS, no termination will occur unless and until DSS actually reviews that form and determines the person is in fact not eligible. Please amend the bill to include the following language.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO RAISED BILL 251 PENDING BEFORE THE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

(c) The Commissioner of Social Services shall ensure that the department can readily identify (1) all redetermination forms which have been received for any program it administers and are waiting to be processed, and (2) which of these forms were received by the deadline provided by the department for their submission and which were submitted after that deadline.

(d) The Commissioner shall ensure that, for all benefit programs other than Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, no beneficiary who has timely submitted a redetermination form by the deadline provided by the department will be terminated from their benefits until a review of the redetermination form is completed and the individual is found to no longer be eligible based on what is stated on that form or obtained from other sources.

(e) The Commissioner shall ensure that all beneficiaries of the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, who submit the redetermination form by the deadline provided by the department, are afforded an opportunity for an interview sufficiently before the end of the renewal period so that the redetermination can be timely processed.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this proposal.