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Appropriations Committee Public Hearing Testimony

Julie Peters, Executive Director, Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut

Simsbury, CT

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Julie Peters, Executive Director at the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut. I am submitting this testimony in **opposition** to **H.B. No. 6846**. With this budget proposal, the Governor has once again recommended elimination of funding for BIAC to provide critical services to CT residents, once again using the exact same language which has been improperly used for years, despite our efforts to correct the mischaracterization of our organization and the essential services we provide for the State.

For over 30 years, BIAC has received an operating grant from the Department of Social Services to provide ***entirely free*** resources and supports which the State is unable to provide. No one else does what BIAC does which is why DSS contracts with BIAC to provide the many essential services that DSS is not equipped to offer. Each year since 2006 this grant has been threatened by calling BIAC an “advocacy” organization. Each year, you, the Appropriations Committee, has heard the concerns of those we support and reinstated BIAC’s funding.

In his budget proposal again this year, the Governor does not seem to understand that the DSS **contracts with BIAC to provide services required as part of the Medicaid ABI Waiver program**. The contract with BIAC is used as evidence in five sections of the Waiver application showing that DSS is meeting the obligations of this federal program.

If BIAC’s contract with DSS would end, **DSS would no longer have the mechanism to provide these essential services required as part of the ABI Medicaid Waiver and needed for compliance with CMS**. BIAC’s services only cost the state \$120,920 last year. In fact, the services we offer are so comprehensive that the DSS public awareness campaign on brain injury, which they use each year, does

not list any DSS phone number on their billboards and signs. *It lists the BIAC Helpline number (see attached photograph.)* Despite an increase of over 600% in calls to BIAC’s helpline, BIAC has not received an increase in our operating grant in over 10 years, and, in fact, we have received only cuts.

Despite amazing advances, the medical community is not able to restore “life as they knew it” to those who survive or to their loved ones. Even BIAC cannot to do that — but we **CAN** and **DO** provide brain injury survivors and their families with the ongoing support and resources needed to optimize recovery, and that makes BIAC a genuinely critical lifeline on what is always a very long and difficult journey back.

The bottom line is this: With BIAC the State’s *de facto* resource for brain injury services, eliminating BIAC’s operating grant will devastate the delivery of services and supports to thousands of Connecticut residents and the ever-increasing number of returning veterans whose lives have been shattered by the experience of brain injury. I ask that you commit to **increase funding** for the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut within DSS and protect both the grant and those we serve - in the months and years to come. Thank you.

Department of Social Services Banner

