

# H.B. No. 6909: An Act Establishing the Connecticut Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board

*Testimony Submitted to the Human Services Committee:*

March 5, 2015

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Markley, Representative Wood and honorable members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Kristopher Sortwell and I am a Program Manager at Project Genesis, Inc., a nonprofit organization providing services to brain injury survivors across Central and Eastern Connecticut. I am also the acting Vice President of the Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board and a Certified Brain Injury Specialist. Please accept my written testimony in support of H.B. No. 6909.

1.7 million people in the United States sustain a TBI each year. It is hard to believe that with a statistic so high; Traumatic Brain Injury is still known as the silent epidemic. This is due to a lack of education, resources, and current data. With the establishment of the Connecticut Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board, the state would be taking a significant step toward publicly acknowledging the seriousness of this issue.

The Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board is an un-biased group of professionals, family members, and survivors that share common goals, to address the day to day needs of survivors in our community and to advocate for those who struggle to be heard. The heart of this board is its ability to educate and train families, providers, and survivors. As part of the education process and task analysis, the experienced team, that makes up the TBI advisory board, has the ability to address the significant need for comprehensive TBI tracking systems in order to collect data on incidence, patient demographics, nature of injury, cause of injury, injury locale, details on severity of injury and outcomes. With current data trends and statistics, we as a team, can make educated decisions in regards to statewide services for survivors of brain injury.

Members of the TBI community have definitely seen their share of difficult times due to lack of advocacy, education, and leadership. Prior to the introduction of the ABI Waiver of Connecticut, TBI survivors were placed in nursing homes, chronic disease hospitals, and immediate care facilities for persons with intellectual disabilities. Through advocacy and dedication, such as that provided by the TBI Advisory Board, the ABI Waiver was introduced and now survivors are able to live in their own homes in the community and participate as active members of society. This demonstrates the extraordinary possibilities that can take place for the TBI population with leadership, education, and advocacy. The Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board can help survivors reach their next significant milestone.

We ask that you please support H.B. 6909, but most of all we ask that you please help us support the TBI survivors of Connecticut.

Thank you, in advance, for accepting my testimony.

Kristopher Sortwell, CBIS  
Project Genesis, Inc.