February 26, 2015
Human Services Committee Public Hearing Testimony
From Carol Buckheit, West Hartford, CT

RE: H.B. No. 6846 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS.

Dear Legislators,

I am submitting this testimony *in opposition to the governor's budget recommendations for human services programs.*

Specifically, I ask that you restore funding for the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut (BIAC) to at least $150,000.

BIAC is not solely an advocacy organization! For over 30 years, they have provided critical, *entirely free* resources and supports to people with brain injury. They've done this through an operating grant from the Department of Social Services to provide much-needed services which the State can't provide.

Indeed, BIAC meets the needs of the State's brain injury survivors on behalf of DSS as efficiently as it does effectively, providing all services at a fraction of what it would cost DSS to provide these services. BIAC's work on behalf of DSS also reduces the brain injury-related workload at DSS.

If BIAC's contract with DSS would end, DSS would no longer be able to provide these essential services required as part of the ABI Medicaid Waiver and needed for compliance with the Centers for Medicaid Services. BIAC's services only cost the state $120,920 last year. 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, have received only cuts.

Moreover, funds BIAC receives from PA 04-199 are NOT state funds. BIAC's fundraising and a small operating grant does not come close to covering the costs needed to supply basic services. These funds are paid by the very people who so often cause brain injuries to occur.

Lastly, brain injuries are devastating to individuals, families, and our state. It is not only the right thing to do to create a safety net for Connecticut residents who have to face the dreadful physical and cognitive consequences of brain injuries, but it is smart public policy. Providing community services and supports is far less costly than nursing home care.

Please restore full funding to the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut to continue their critical work.

Sincerely,

Carol Buckheit
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