

Deb Shulansky  
West Hartford, CT

February 27, 2015

*Appropriations Committee Public Hearing Testimony*

Dear Honorable Chairs and Members of the Committee,

My name is Deb Shulansky and I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to recommendations in HB 6846, *An Act Implementing The Governor's Budget Recommendations for Human Services Programs*, as a representative of the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut, in my role as the Director of Community Outreach and Support. The Governor's proposed budget for human services programs once again recommends the elimination of funding for the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut, using the same inaccuracy which has been used for the past nine years, that BIAC solely is an advocacy organization. Not only am I asking that you restore all funding for the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut, I am asking that you commit to *increase* our funding to \$150,000 (with specific language referencing the grant in the back of budget).

As the Director of Community Outreach and Support, I oversee brain injury support groups throughout the State of Connecticut. In 2014, more than 3200 brain injury survivors and caregivers attended BIAC sponsored support groups. These support groups are open to traumatic brain injury survivors, their families and their caregivers. Our support groups serve an important role for TBI survivors, including veterans with combat concussion, in their re-integration into the community. Without the funding BIAC receives through DSS, the existence and continuation of these support groups is at risk.

Because the only cure for a brain injury is prevention, BIAC's education and outreach programs are critical to helping prevent brain injuries from occurring, and thus saving the state of Connecticut from the enormous costs of medical care and lost productivity which a brain injury can cause.

BIAC is the only non-profit organization in the State to offer a diverse series of educational and training presentations devoted solely to brain injury prevention and awareness, including a Conference attended by over 275 professionals who work with survivors. In 2014, over 8000 people were reached through BIAC's unique programs, which include BIAC's critical training and consultation to most of the key State agencies - such as DSS, DCF, DPH, DOE, DOC, DMHAS and DDS, to

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assure that all those who work with an individual with a brain injury understand the challenges survivors face. In the process, we have helped to foster greater collaboration between these agencies, so that individuals are better identified and served. There is no other organization in the State of CT that offers the trainings BIAC offers, without charge, and we have been contracted by the State of Connecticut to do so for almost 30 years.

In summary, **BIAC is seeking your commitment to funding \$150,000 for the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut operating grant, which we receive through DSS.** BIAC's continued subsistence and vitality is necessary to ensure that brain injury survivors, their families and their caregivers receive support, and that brain injury prevention education programs which are not available elsewhere in the State remain in place. We must ensure that these services are not reduced or eliminated altogether, in order to reduce the number of survivors turning to the State of Connecticut for help in the future.

Thank you.

Deb Shulansky