American Academy of Pediatrics
Hezekiah Beardsley Connecticut Chapter

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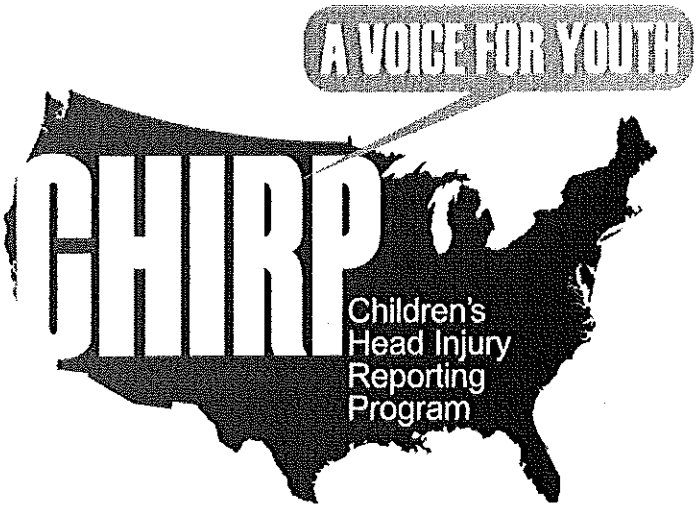
Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and Members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Karen Laugel and I am Chairman of the Connecticut American Academy of Pediatrics Traumatic Brain Injury-Return to Learn Initiative. I am submitting testimony in opposition to H.B 6846 "An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations for Human Services Programs."

H.B. 6846 erroneously labels the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut (BIAC) solely as an "advocacy organization" and proposes to eliminate funding. Note that BIAC provides the following services to Connecticut constituents (free of charge):

- resource and consultation hotline for injured constituents, their families, and their health care providers
- monthly support groups for injured constituents and their families
- education programs aimed at prevention of traumatic brain injury, for schools and community organizations
- brain injury training programs for key State agencies (e.g. DSS, VA, DCF, DPH, DOE, DOC, DMHAS, DDS, BRS)

In addition, BIAC and the Connecticut American Academy of Pediatrics have recently joined in a collaborative effort to launch a statewide registry of children who have sustained a traumatic brain injury (CHIRP: Children's Head Injury Reporting Program). CHIRP's mission is to examine the circumstances related to head injury in children age 19 years and younger. Pediatricians and other physicians will be reporting injured children at the time of diagnosis via an online internet based system. With the data obtained from CHIRP, we will be able to direct prevention, education, and health care in a targeted effort to decrease the incidence of injury. BIAC will be key to CHIRP's ability provide a team of educators to teach prevention, recognition, and response to injury, to Connecticut's families and schools.



The Center for Disease Control reports that nearly 500,000 children annually, aged 14 years and younger, present to emergency departments with traumatic brain injury. However, the incidence is estimated to be much higher because there is no mechanism to capture injured children who are seen elsewhere: e.g. school based health clinics, private practices, walk-in centers, etc. CHIRP will serve as a more accurate measure of the incidence of pediatric head injury in the state of Connecticut and can be expanded to a national data base.

Note that elementary and middle school aged children who have sustained head injuries are often a neglected population. Studies show that up to 70% of TBI in children aged 19 years and younger are not sports related (Meehan W; J of Pediatrics, Dec 2010; Vol 157 (6)). Yet current Connecticut law (http://www.cga.ct.gov/2014/act/pa/pdf/2014PA-00066-R00HB-05113-PA.pdf) pertains only to those children injured while involved in interscholastic and youth sports; it has not been expanded to include children of all ages or children injured by any means.

Accurate incidence information is essential for the planning of prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation services. In addition, meaningful data is necessary to affect positive behavior change. Therefore, an accurate understanding of the numbers of children affected by TBI, as well as location and means of injury, is essential for the planning of health care and recovery management as well as educational programs.

The states that have successfully implemented comprehensive educational programs to address childhood head injury have established collaboration between the medical and educational communities, and public and private sectors: for example, Colorado: http://cokidswithbraininjury.com/, Oregon: http://brain101.orcasinc.com/, Pennsylvania: https://www.brainsteps.net/.

The Connecticut American Academy of Pediatrics is committed to reducing the incidence of childhood traumatic brain injury through our collaborative work with the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut, and we implore the Appropriations Committee to restore BIAC's funding in support of our common goal.

Thank you.

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