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Testimony Submitted to the Human Services Committee:

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

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Markley, Representative Wood and members of the Human Services Committee.

I would like to express my gratitude to Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Markley, Representative Wood and members of the Human Services Committee for the opportunity to talk to you today about House Bill 6909.

My name is Karen Sargent, and I am the Director of Vocational Services for Mindscape, Industries, a private agency which provides vocational services for individuals with Traumatic and Acquired Brain Injuries (TBI and ABI).

As you know, traumatic brain injuries can be caused by traumatic events, such as motor vehicle accidents or falls, or acquired as a result of a medical condition or problem, such as anoxia or brain tumors. Traumatic Brain Injury can happen to anyone at any time. Your support of H.B. 6906 will establish the Connecticut TBI Advisory Board. The need for a TBI Advisory Board is clear: Connecticut has a fragmented system of services and programs for individuals and their family members living with TBI. Yet, while valuable resources exist in this state, the complexity of the system and the lack of coordination between public and private programs often precludes those individuals from receiving the optimum care and support to promote recovery from TBI. It also creates confusion and mis-information about the prevention and treatment options for TBI. The TBI Advisory Board of Connecticut would mitigate this confusion through the establishment of a Board comprised of Subject Matter Experts. These SMEs are currently and actively involved in some type of service delivery system providing services to individuals with TBI. They may be survivors, family members, advocates or credentialed professionals and, as members of the TBI Advisory Board, they will work together to identify the full scope and impact TBI has on Connecticut's service delivery systems and their recipients.

Despite the potential cognitive, physical, and behavioral issues that often prevent maximum recovery from happening, individuals who sustain a brain injury, regardless of the severity of the injury, are usually very motivated to return to work, sustain meaningful relationships, and desire to contribute significantly to their communities. The potential high cost of care and services for individuals utilizing public healthcare systems along with the intrinsic desire of this population to recover, regain independence, and contribute significantly to society, presents the State of Connecticut with opportunities to identify service delivery models that work well, where opportunities for improvement exist and the means to investigate foreseeable opportunities that will promote recovery and reduce the long term financial burden on other public programs. The TBI Advisory Board would be an integral part of the conversation among policy makers, state, local, public and private agencies and their stakeholders in understanding these opportunities and how to fashion win-win outcomes for all.

I am hopeful that this legislature will see, now more than ever, how important it is to address the needs of Connecticuters living with TBI through a TBI Advisory Board. I see this Board, with its SMEs, as a one stop center for understanding the data and associated research impacting quality TBI services in Connecticut. I see this Board acting as an impartial witness to the issues and associated complexities of our current fragmented service delivery system which may unwittingly impede needed services and supports to survivors and their families. I see this Board as a means of making thoughtful and appropriate recommendations to Connecticut's Senators and Representatives, so you in turn, can make well informed decisions, policies and future legislation around TBI services. Lastly, I see this Board as a means to assist you in keeping up to date on current issues, trends, research, accessibility issues relating to services and outcomes affecting your constituents living with TBI.

Thank you for your support of this very important legislation.

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