

February 11, 2016

Appropriations Committee Public Hearing Testimony

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Good Evening Chairpersons and Members of the Appropriations Committee. I am submitting this testimony in opposition to THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS. In his proposal, the Governor seeks to reduce or eliminate funding for important core services of the Department, including funding for the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut.

Brain injury has been found to be a frequent topic of discussion as well as a public health issue in the United States (Max et al., 2014). The existing literature on traumatic brain injury has suggested that children and adolescents with a TBI not only face cognitive impairments that persist over time but are also at a higher risk for developing psychiatric disorders and exhibiting behavioral and social difficulties post injury (Noggle & Pierson, 2010). Research on the effect of brain injury on adolescents suggests a strong correlation between increased risk of developing and being diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder and the occurrence of a brain injury (Max et al., 2014; Max et al., 2012). Using data from the National Comorbidity Survey-Adolescent Supplement (NCS-A) based on nearly 6,000 parents nationally who completed self-administered questionnaires (PSAQ), we found significant associations between frequency of head injuries and major depressive disorder, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and behavior disorders such as conduct disorder and oppositional defiant disorder. BIAC is an organization dedicated to providing assistance to individuals with a brain injury, many of whom may be at risk for developing or experiencing psychiatric symptoms. These can include children and their parents who need assistance with both the physical and mental challenges that brain injuries cause. The data highlights the association between increased number of head injuries and increased likelihood of psychiatric disorders in children. This association suggests the need for assessment of psychiatric disorders, specifically mood, behavioral, and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorders, in children who have sustained a head injury. Furthermore, because TBI can lead to poor judgment, deficits in communication and learning, skills, behavioral and personality disorders, these individuals are at increased risk to drop out of school and become involved in and penetrate deeper into the criminal justice system (Helgeson, 2015; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Administration, 2011). Early assessment and intervention for psychiatric disorders following a head injury could have a significant outcome in the lives of these adolescents (Noggle & Pierson, 2010). Thus, we need funding for organizations like BIAC who can serve on the front lines of service connection and support for those who are vulnerable and can continue to greatly benefit from our assistance.

In his budget summary, the Governor incorrectly asserts that for years the budget “*automatically funds every activity or line item previously funded, with increases for inflation...*” This is simply not true. BIAC has not received any increase in our contract in over 10 years and actually currently received 13% less than we received in 2008.

- For over 30 years, BIAC has received an operating grant from the Department of Social Services to provide **entirely free** resources and supports which the State is unable to provide.
- The Department of Social Services contracts with BIAC to provide services required as part of the Medicaid ABI Waiver program. **The contract with BIAC is used as evidence in several sections of the Waiver application showing that DSS is meeting the obligations of this federal program.** BIAC's responsibilities ***according to the ABI Waiver Application submitted to the Centers for Medicaid Services (CMS)*** include:
 - Supporting the participant in Service Plan Development and providing information regarding participant direction
 - Disseminating information to the community related to brain injury.
 - Facilitating free monthly support groups throughout Connecticut
 - Statewide toll free support number, providing consultation and resource facilitation for persons who have sustained a brain injury, their families, caregivers and providers
 - Training and community education programs
 - Through BIAC, information about the identification and reporting of abuse, neglect is disseminated to clients, families, and their representatives.
- **In the amendments to both Waivers which has recently been proposed by DSS, BIAC is the only organization approved to provide advanced training for case managers.**
- **No one else does what BIAC does, including the Department of Social Services (DSS),** which is why DSS contracts with BIAC to provide the many essential services that it is not equipped to offer. BIAC meets the needs of the State's brain injury survivors on behalf of DSS as efficiently as it does effectively.
 - BIAC provides all services at a fraction of what it would cost DSS to provide these services.
 - BIAC's work on behalf of DSS reduces the brain injury-related workload at DSS.
 - BIAC provides critical training and consultation to most of the State key agencies- including DSS, VA, DCF, DPH, DOE, DOC, DMHAS, DDS, and BRS.
- If BIAC's contract with DSS would end, **DSS would no longer have the mechanism to provide these essential services required as part of the ABI Medicaid Waiver and needed for compliance with CMS.** BIAC's services only cost the state \$114,460 last year. Despite a staggering increase in calls to BIAC's helpline and requests for assistance from DSS over the past 15 years, BIAC has only seen its contract reduced.

Despite every effort to control costs and to seek additional sources of funding, it will become increasingly more difficult for BIAC to meet the obligations of our contract, including the mandated requirement for new training, without additional funding. We are seeking the reinstatement of our contract related funding that has been removed through attrition as well as a small amount of additional funding so we can meet our mandated obligations under the requirements of our state contract. Please create a line item for the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut to at least \$150,000.

Thank you