

TESTIMONY FOR THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

Submitted by: Michelle (Shelli) Dyer
Public Hearing Date: February 11, 2016

Testimony in opposition of *THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS*

Dear Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Michelle Dyer, and I am a neuroscience major at Trinity College. I am writing in opposition of *THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS*. The passage of these recommendations could negatively impact Connecticut's survivors of brain injury. With this proposal, the Governor is aiming to reduce or eliminate the funding of services offered by the Department of Social Services (DSS), which includes the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut (BIAC).

The BIAC is committed to promoting education, advocacy, and services for individuals with all ranges of traumatic brain injury, including concussions. Although concussions are considered mild traumatic brain injuries (mTBI), there is nothing mild about them. Unfortunately, I am overly aware of this. As a mTBI survivor, I know that a brain injury can affect an individual in every aspect of their life, including their identity, ability to relate to others, remember, and the very core of their personality. In addition to becoming a victim of brain injury, many survivors also become a victim to a lack of support and understanding from those in their daily life.

For many TBI survivors, however, the BIAC offers much needed support, resources, and hope for the future. The BIAC is dedicated to improving the lives of survivors through the promotion of brain injury awareness, prevention, advocacy, support, research, and community engagement. For more than 30 years, BIAC has provided these free resources to the citizens of CT. Grieving and the feeling of loss are often part of the process of recovering from a brain injury. The passage the Governor's recommendations could significantly reduce the services provided by BIAC to Connecticut's brain injury survivors, adding one more loss for these individuals.

There are no services in Connecticut that offer the resources that the BIAC provides, including DSS. This is why DSS contracts BIAC to provide these required services as part of the Medicaid ABI Waiver program. In addition, BIAC has provided these indispensable services at a significantly reduced cost of what it would cost DSS. Due to the contract DSS has with BIAC, several sections of the Waiver contract allow DSS to satisfy the requirements of this federal program.

The 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 have recently been proposed by DSS, BIAC is the only organization approved to provide advanced training for case managers.

In closing, I urge the committee to oppose the Governor's budget recommendations for human services programs. The passage of these proposals would mean that DSS would no longer have the ability to provide essential services required as part of the ABI Medicaid Waiver and needed for compliance with CMS. **In addition, I ask the committee to reinstate BIAC's contract related funding that has been removed through attrition, including additional funding that will allow BIAC to meet mandated obligations under the requirements of the state contract.**

A brain injury can occur any time, any place, and to anyone. Please create a line item for the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut for at least \$150,000 to ensure that these indispensable services remain available for the brain injury survivors of Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Shelli Dyer

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