

**February 11, 2016**

**Appropriations Committee Public Hearing Testimony**

**Ginger Mills**

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.

I am a current board member in the Brain Injury Alliance of CT but am also a doctorate student in Clinical Psychology. Throughout my training in becoming a neuropsychologist, I have worked in several hospitals throughout the state of CT and have witnessed firsthand the life-changing effects of a traumatic brain injury. Too often, families are left with uncertainty as to the next steps and are in need of specialists whom they can turn to for questions and advice. BIAC helps provide such guidance to families and its value is immeasurable. BIAC's services are essential to families who have suffered a traumatic brain injury and cutting funding would ultimately result in leaving individuals uncared for and unheard. Thus, I ask that you reconsider your budget recommendations and consider the lives of the families and survivors of brain injury who have already been through so much.

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.

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 increasingly become 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,

Ginger Mills, MA