

February 11, 2016

Appropriations Committee Public Hearing Testimony

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Resident - Town of West Hartford

Good Evening Chairpersons and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Deb Shulansky and I am the Director of Community Outreach and Support at the Brain Injury Alliance of CT (BIAC). I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to Governor Malloy's Budget Recommendations for Human Services Programs, in which the Governor seeks to reduce or eliminate funding for important core services of the Department, including funding for the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut.

As the Director of Community Outreach and Support, I oversee brain injury support groups throughout the State of Connecticut. In 2015, more than 3000 brain injury survivors and caregivers attended BIAC sponsored support groups. These support groups are open to traumatic brain injury survivors, their families and their caregivers. Our support groups serve an important role for TBI survivors, including veterans with combat concussion, in their re-integration into the community. Without the funding BIAC receives through DSS, the existence and continuation of these support groups is at risk.

Because the only cure for a brain injury is prevention, BIAC's education and outreach programs are critical in helping to prevent brain injuries from occurring, and thus saving the state of Connecticut from the enormous costs of medical care and lost productivity which a brain injury can cause. BIAC offers a diverse series of education and training presentations devoted solely to brain injury prevention and awareness, including a Conference attended by over 300 professionals who work with survivors. In 2015, over 2800 people were reached through BIAC's unique programs, which include BIAC's critical training and consultation to key State agencies such as DSS, DCF, DPH, DOE, DOC, DMHAS and DDS, to assure that all those who work with an individual with a brain injury understand the challenges brain injury survivors face. In the process, we have helped to foster greater collaboration amongst these agencies, so that individuals are better identified and served. There is no other organization in the State of CT that offers the trainings BIAC offers, without charge, and we have been contracted by the State of Connecticut to do so for almost 30 years.

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.**

Despite every effort to control costs and to seek additional sources of funding, it will be increasingly 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.