

**ABI and ABI II Waiver Amendment Re-submittal and Hearing - April 11, 2016
(Privatization of Case Management)**

Submitted By: Kelly A. Stein, Service Manager of Independent Living Services, Ability Beyond

April 11, 2016

Members of the Appropriation and Human Services Committee, my name is Kelly Stein and I am writing you on the behalf of my organization, Ability Beyond. Ability Beyond is a not for profit organization that was founded in 1953 by a group of parents who wanted a better life for their children with disabilities. Today we offer one of the most comprehensive systems of community-based support for people with disabilities in the Northeast, helping nearly 3,000 people across two states to overcome a variety of challenges. Ability Beyond employs over 1,100 [dedicated staff](#), engages over 500 [volunteers](#) and is governed by a voluntary [Board of Directors and Trustees](#). At Ability Beyond we strive to provide the highest quality of services and as we grow and evolve, we remain focused on the individual.

This focus has brought us on a journey to be one of the first providers on the CT ABI Waiver since it began in 1999. We currently today serve 20 individuals who are brain injury survivors. We currently provide supports at a substantial loss each year. We continue to do so because we are committed to the individuals we provide supports to.

I am here today to share specifically our experiences being part of the pilot program in Danbury working with CCCI which stands for Connecticut Community Care, Incorporated over the past year. Previous to CCCI being piloted in Danbury, our agency had a wonderful relationship with the Danbury DSS office Case Managers. When I would attend meetings and events with other providers' present I would hear their struggles of having outdated plans, changes not being made in a timely manner or lack of team participation on the behalf of the DSS caseworker. I was never able to contribute to these hardships because other than a few hiccups we worked very well together in Danbury. Then I would say at the end of 2013 going into 2014 we began to start experiencing what other providers have been. This was due to DSS Case Managers being out on leave and the ones who were working struggled with finding the balance to meet the requirements of any elder abuse calls received and being able to keep up with team meetings and ABI Waiver paperwork requirements. A once wonderful relationship began to be strained so when we found out that the DSS Danbury office would pilot the ABI Waiver case management being given to a non-state agency we weren't sure how to respond. Initially we were worried what the change would mean. On one hand we were struggling with expired plans, receiving changes late causing billing issues and limited communication. Yet we were familiar with who we were working with and now would have to learn a brand new case manager with unfamiliar expectations which caused us to walk cautiously.

The initial hand off involved transitional team meetings where the DSS Case Manager went over each plan with each individual present with the new CCCI Case Manager. Individual meetings were set up between the individual, guardian/family and CCCI to get to know the individual. Immediate weekly communication occurred. Over the course of this past year we have had our growing pains based on CCCI learning the ABI Waiver, us adapting to very active case managers, all of us understanding our roles and adjusting to deadlines and expectations. There were times I had to step in facilitate a discussion with the supervisor however no matter what the issues were, there was a "work together" philosophy which I

appreciated. I can say today that we are actively in touch with the two assigned case managers at CCCI almost every week with quick responses. They are visiting the individuals in their homes and advocating during meetings to meet their needs. They bring a more hands on case management style which the individuals appreciate the attentiveness each of their CCCI case manager provide and since the switch plans have been timelier.

I can understand that change can be scary. I can say from my experience working at Ability Beyond in both states, CT and NY that our agency knows firsthand conflict free case management through our involvement with the NY ABI Waiver. We have found great success in a choice based philosophy and because of this experience, over this past year I was able to watch now our CT individuals who receive ABI Waiver funding experience firsthand what it would mean to privatize case management. Based on what I have witnessed and been directly involved with, it has been a success. I believe that if we were to switch back I would be disappointed for our individuals and for the working relationship built with the new case managers to lose the positive overall quality of service being received.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Kelly A. Stein

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