



Senate Health Committee – H.B. 33- Interested Party Testimony

Lauren Holly, Executive Director, Brain Injury Association of Ohio

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Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bill 33.

My name is Lauren Holly, and I am the Executive Director at the Brain Injury Association of Ohio. Brain Injury has become a hidden and undermanaged public health crisis in Ohio. In the State of Ohio, 1 in 4 adults has sustained at least one traumatic brain injury in their lifetime. That amounts to almost 2 million people in Ohio. Most likely, everyone in this room has known at least one individual that has suffered a concussion, a stroke, a drug overdose or a brain tumor that has resulted in a brain injury. And even if you don't know someone today, you could easily know someone tomorrow—your child could get injured at an athletic event, your parent could trip and fall, you could be involved in a car or bike accident. Brain injuries happen in an instant, and the impact is often long term.

I came to the Brain Injury Association not just for professional reasons, but also because I have a family member who has sustained two traumatic brain injuries. I saw firsthand the lack of coordination of care, the difficulties of qualifying for and receiving services and the truly life altering impact that a traumatic brain injury can have on not only the survivor but the family surrounding them. Having worked in social services and healthcare for 23 years, I have seen systems of care built to support aging individuals and individuals with developmental disabilities guiding them to care options, connecting them with resources and helping them succeed in the community. In Ohio the system of care for individuals with brain injury is woefully inadequate to meet the needs of survivors and families often leaving families struggling to find resources and often having to seek supports out of state.

Every day the Brain Injury Association of Ohio speaks to TBI survivors and families that are trying to manage caregiving and find the resources they need. The stories are endless and often heartbreaking. The range of reasons for a brain injury are so vast: people being choked and deprived of oxygen, people being punched or knocked down, people fainting and hitting their head, drug overdoses, brain tumors, strokes, sports injuries or other unexpected accidents. Whatever the situation, it is never planned for. That is help is needed—to fill a gap

in services, give families hope, and help patients and caregivers connect with the care and resources they need.

Brain injury often results in long term chronic implications that affect an individual's ability to live independently, work, go to school and maintain relationships. While there are programs, services and therapies that can work to improve those outcomes for Ohioans, they are limited, difficult to find, and underfunded. Families tell us again and again that it is a complicated, frustrating and overwhelming maze trying to find help.

In the last biennium budget, Brain Injury Services received a small increase in funding to expand services. With this increase the Brain Injury Association of Ohio was able to add three new programs including a monthly webinar series, a health and wellness program, and a transition program. The helpline capacity was also expanded by 100%, reaching more Ohioans than we had in years. Also with that increase, the Ohio Brain Injury Program added their brain injury connection program and expanded training opportunities for professionals across the state. We were able to have a significant impact with those dollars and yet we are a long way from being able to meet the needs of Ohioans with brain injury.

We did an analysis of brain injury services in some of our peer states. In the scope of brain injury funding, Pennsylvania currently has an investment of \$21.92 per resident, Kentucky has an investment of \$10.74 per resident, and West Virginia has an investment of \$1.27 per resident.

In the State of Ohio, our current investment in brain injury services is 5 cents per resident. If this bill is passed as written, with an increase in funding to 1.1 million, it will raise our investment to 9 cents per resident of Ohio. The Ohio BRAINS proposal written in collaboration with the Ohio Brain Injury Advisory Committee, Ohio Brain Injury Program and the Brain Injury Association of Ohio proposed a funding level of 1.7 million which would make Ohio's total investment in brain injury services 14 cents per resident.

The lack of funding and resources not only impacts an individual's quality of life and ability to succeed after brain injury, it also effects our state's burden of care. When individuals do not have access to appropriate resources, support, and medical treatment, they often need to seek support from state-based assistance programs such as Medicaid waivers, unemployment, nursing home placement and more. According to the 2019 Biennial Report on the impact of traumatic brain injury on the people of Ohio, traumatic brain injuries that occurred in 2017 in Ohio will have lifetime costs of \$6 billion in medical expenses and lost wages.

There is a solution--and by increasing funding to brain injury services in this biennium budget--you are investing in that solution. We know from research studies such as the work done by Lance Trexler at Indiana University, that for those receiving community-based support services, 64% returned to work after brain injury, versus 40-50% who did not receive those same supports. The research done by Dr. John Corrigan at Ohio State University has shown that

individuals living in states with better long-term services and supports had significantly more community involvement and achieved a higher quality of life.

The increased funding allocated to brain injury services in the amendment to the biennium budget will be used to create a more robust community-based support structure for brain injury survivors that will allow us to support people in achieving better outcomes, gain higher levels of independence, and will ultimately save state dollars.

On behalf of the Brain Injury Community and the over two million brain injury survivors in Ohio, we thank you for the inclusion of this funding increase in the proposed amendments, we urge you to consider increasing the funding to the full proposed amount of 1.7 million. We greatly appreciate the committee's support for Brain Injury Services in HB33 and look forward to doing better for our Ohioans impacted by brain injury.

Chairman Huffman, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts regarding House Bill 33. I appreciate your attention and will be happy to address any questions the committee may have.