

## **Written Testimony of Philip Crippen**

**Board Member for Brain Injury Association of Ohio and Parent of a TBI Survivor**

### **In Support of an Amendment to HB 96 to Increase Funding for the Ohio Brain Injury Program**

**March 6, 2025**

Chairman Schmidt, Vice Chair Deeter, Ranking Member Somani, and Members of the Health Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today supporting an amendment to the state budget that would increase funding for the Ohio Brain Injury Program to \$1.75 million.

My name is Phil Crippen, and I have been a resident of Ohio for most of my life. I am here today both as a board member of the Brain Injury Association of Ohio and as a parent of a brain injury survivor—or, as he likes to say, a brain injury thriver.

My wife and I raised our three children in Dayton, living what most would consider a normal and blessed life. Our middle son, Conor, was an exceptional young man—intelligent, athletic, and outgoing. He attended Loyola University in Chicago and was studying to be a neurologist, as he was always fascinated with the brain.

On the evening of March 16, 2013, Conor was struck by a drunk driver while crossing the street with friends. When the ER doctors called us, they said he had one of the worst brain injuries they had ever seen and did not expect him to survive the night. The medical team worked tirelessly, and he made it through. Conor remained in a coma for over three weeks and spent five weeks in the ICU.

Eventually, he was able to come off life support, but he had physically and mentally regressed to infancy. He couldn't walk, talk, eat, or control his actions—he had to relearn everything. It took Conor 4 months before he could walk, 6 months before he could talk and 8 months on a feeding tube. We were fortunate that my wife could take time off to be with him full-time during this time.

Before the accident, I barely knew what TBI stood for, let alone how to help my son. My wife and I entered a world we knew nothing about, with no clear direction on where to turn for help. Conor began rehabilitation, but progress was slow. We constantly had to advocate and plead for continued support, knowing his potential was greater than what many assumed. We were unaware of any advocacy programs in Ohio at the time and, only through hours of research and some luck, were able to find organizations and individuals that provided support and guidance.

Soon it will be 12 years since Conor's accident. His recovery has been remarkable, far exceeding expectations. Today, he works at Trader Joe's, is a wonderful uncle to our grandchildren, teaches us daily about the power of hope, and gives presentations to medical students across Ohio to help them understand brain injury from the patient's perspective. He still faces challenges with memory, balance, and loneliness but can live a productive life. The journey to help Conor has not stopped as we continue to look for new therapies to help him.

There is a common phrase in the TBI community: “If you’ve seen one brain injury, you’ve seen one brain injury.” The spectrum of brain injuries is vast and varied—no two individuals are alike. The programs we seek support for will help address these individual needs. For example, we want to implement a proven program called Brain Steps, which educates teachers, parents, and students about brain injuries and helps students reintegrate into school. When Conor returned to college courses, we had to individually educate each teacher about his challenges. A program like Brain Steps would make this process much easier for parents, students, and educators, ensuring a smoother transition and better support.

We have met many others affected by brain injuries and know it can happen to anyone, at any stage of life. It is unpredictable, life-altering, and often invisible. Without proper support, survivors and their families face significant barriers to recovery, employment, and independent living. Increasing funding for the Ohio Brain Injury Program presents an opportunity to make a meaningful impact on thousands of Ohioans.

As a board member, I have seen the effectiveness of BIAOH grow and expand. I know we can continue to positively impact lives with our current and proposed services. With the right resources and support, recovery is possible. Investing in brain injury services not only improves outcomes for survivors and their families but also reduces long-term healthcare costs for our state.

I urge you to support this amendment to ensure that Ohio’s brain injury survivors receive the care, support, and services they need to reclaim their lives. Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.

