



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

Emily Murray, Brain Injury Survivor

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Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bill 33.

My name is Emily Murray and I am a brain injury survivor. Brain Injury has become a hidden and undermanaged public health crisis 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.

Every day the Brain Injury Association of Ohio speaks to TBI survivors, like me 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.

The Brain Injury Association of Ohio, the Ohio Brain Injury Program and the Brain Injury Advisory Committee came together to develop the Ohio BRAINS proposal to help strengthen the services and supports offered to brain injury survivors. The proposal suggested funding at 1.7 million, an increase from the current funding at 550,000 per year. The current house version of HB 33 has included an increase to 1.1 million for brain injury services. While we are incredibly grateful for this show of support, with the lower funding amount significantly fewer individuals will be able to be served. At the 1.1 million funding level programming capacity will be reduced by 5,300 individuals.

I come before you today to express my strong support for the full funding of the Ohio BRAINS proposal. As a concerned citizen and advocate, I firmly believe that investing in brain injury prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and support services is essential for the well-being of individuals and families affected by these devastating conditions.

Increased funding for brain injury programs is crucial to improve outcomes for survivors in Ohio. The requested funding will be used to implement evidence-based practices that optimize outcomes for individuals with brain injuries.

Moreover, funding expansion will enhance community-based support services for brain injury survivors and their families. These services encompass resource facilitation, transition navigation, support groups, peer support, and health and wellness programming. By investing in comprehensive support systems, we can assist individuals in their journey to regain independence, improve their quality of life, and reduce the long-term burdens on healthcare and social service systems.

I urge the Senate Finance Committee to recognize the urgent need for increased funding for brain injury programs in Ohio. By allocating additional resources to these programs, we can make a significant difference in the lives of individuals affected by brain injuries, reduce healthcare costs, and strengthen our communities.

In conclusion, I implore you to consider the overwhelming evidence supporting fully funding the Ohio BRAINS proposal. By prioritizing these resources, we demonstrate our commitment to the well-being of Ohioans and contribute to a more inclusive and compassionate society.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.