

July 15, 2006

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
184 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
123 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman and Ranking Member Harkin:

The undersigned organizations urge you to restore and increase funding for the Traumatic Brain Injury Programs (TBI) for FY 2007. Specifically, we request **\$15** million for the TBI State Grant Program and **\$6** million for the Protection and Advocacy Grant Program, both administered by the US Health and Resources Services Administration (HRSA), to improve and coordinate access to State service delivery systems. In addition, we support **\$9** million for Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for prevention, public information, and surveillance projects, which help in determining incidence, costs, causes, contributing factors, and other data that is necessary to insure the delivery of effective services for individuals with brain injuries.

Brain Injury is the leading cause of death for Americans between birth and age 44. The major domestic causes of brain injury are motor vehicle crashes and falls. It is also becoming the signature wound of the Iraq War as a growing number of soldiers are suffering from blast injuries. Initially, brain injuries may go undiagnosed when there are other physical combat injuries present only to be discovered later.

TBI is a complex disability that challenges states', families', and other caregivers' ability to respond to the needs of persons with this disabling condition. These individuals need services from multiple state programs including Medicaid, vocational rehabilitation, employment services, education, home health care, mental health, substance abuse, and long-term care services. Without coordinated systems of care, individuals are often placed inappropriately in nursing homes or cared for by family members with little or no support or assistance. When families are no longer able to care for these individuals, the families turn to the state as the only source of help.

In a just released report by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), who was charged with the evaluation of the HRSA State and P&A Systems Grant Programs, the IOM finds that:

- The HRSA's TBI State Grants Program has produced demonstrable, beneficial change in organizational infrastructure and increased visibility of TBI -- essential conditions for improving TBI service systems (Executive Summary, page 4).
- Persons with TBI, their family members, and caregivers report substantial problems in getting basic services, including housing, vocational services, neurobehavioral services, transportation, and respite for caregivers. **Yet efforts to address these issues are stymied by inadequate data systems, insufficient resources, and lack of coordination"** (Executive Summary, page 3).
- **The next stage is critical. Substantial work is needed** to ensure that the infrastructure is effective and TBI service systems improved, expanded, and sustained" (Executive Summary, page 3).

We would appreciate your full support of adequate funding this much needed program, which is very modest in contrast to the enormity of the problem posed by Traumatic Brain Injuries.

Sincerely,

American Brain Injury Coalition
American Physical Therapy Association
Brain Injury Association of America
Division for Learning Disabilities of Council for Exceptional Children
International Brain Injury Association
National Association of Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Brain Injury Research, Treatment and Training Foundation
National Disability Rights Network
North American Brain Injury Society
State and Territorial Injury Prevention Directors Association
The Arc of the United States
United Cerebral Palsy