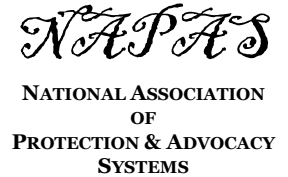




National Association
OF
State Head Injury Administrators



October 18, 2004

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Labor, Health and Human Services,
and Education Subcommittee
190 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6031

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Labor, Health and Human Services,
and Education Subcommittee
184 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6031

Dear Chairman Specter and Senator Harkin:

As the House and Senate prepare to resolve differences between their respective Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bills for FY 2005, the undersigned organizations urge you to retain the House proposed funding level of \$6.2 million for Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) programs authorized by the Traumatic Brain Injury Act of 2000 (TBI).

Originally passed in 1996 and reauthorized in 2000 as part of the Children's Health Act, the TBI Act represents a foundation for coordinated and balanced public policy prevention, education, research and community-living for people with TBI and their circles of support. It is the only federal law that specifically addresses the issues faced by persons with brain injury.

According to the CDC, at least 1.5 million Americans sustain a TBI annually and at least 5.3 million Americans are living with a disability resulting from a TBI. The cost of TBI in the U.S. is estimated to be \$56 billion annually. The annual incidence and prevalence of TBI is higher than Breast Cancer, Multiple Sclerosis, Spinal Cord Injury and HIV/AIDS combined. The statistics involving brain injury are increasing even more now that reports show that traumatic brain injuries account for 14 percent to 20 percent of casualties for those who survive combat in Iraq. Despite the staggering statistics, TBI remains the "silent epidemic" in this country.

In an effort to formalize the process by which information collection is conducted, the TBI Act directs the CDC to support studies in collaboration with State and local health-related agencies and universities to determine the incidence or rate of TBI. The goal of these efforts is to improve service delivery to people living with TBI and to provide even more reliable information to Congress.

CDC is also charged with implementing a national education and public awareness campaign. In 2003, the CDC launched the first phase of its new National Brain Injury Information Center (NBIIC). The NBIIC is a “one-call” national information center that provides all Americans with toll-free information on State-specific resources and links them to services. CDC also has been called upon to study the service needs of health outcomes of people who sustain injuries, including TBI, during mass casualty events during terrorist attacks.

We recognize the difficult decisions the Committee must make in finalizing this year’s appropriations process and again urge you to provide the critical resources needed by the CDC to continue its good work on behalf of people and their families living with brain injury. We also appreciate your leadership and look forward to working with you in the months and years ahead to not only maintain, but enhance funding for the TBI Act.

Sincerely,

Brain Injury Association of America
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Association of Protection & Advocacy Systems