



June 21, 2019

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As you work to draft the FY 2020 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill, the undersigned organizations of the TBI stakeholder community would ask that you allocate \$1 million to the Administration for Community Living for the TBI State Grant Program. This funding request compliments the FY 2020 TBI State Grant Program funding level endorsed by the House of Representatives. The total amount appropriated for this program in the House bill is \$12.321 million.

In the civilian population alone every year, more than 2.8 million people sustain brain injuries from falls, car crashes, assaults, and contact sports. Males are more likely than females to sustain brain injuries. Children, teens, and seniors are at greatest risk. Currently, more than 5 million Americans live with a TBI-related disability.

Increasing numbers of service members returning from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan with TBI and their families are seeking resources for information to better understand TBI and to obtain vital support services to facilitate successful reintegration into their communities.

The TBI Act authorizes the Administration for Community Living (ACL) in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to award grants to (1) states, American Indian Consortia and territories to improve access to service delivery and to (2) state Protection and Advocacy (P&A) Systems to expand advocacy services to include individuals with traumatic brain injury. For the past twenty years the Federal TBI State Grant Program has supported state efforts to address the needs of persons with brain injury and their families and to expand and improve services to underserved and unserved populations including children and youth; veterans and returning troops; and individuals with co-occurring conditions.

In FY2009, the number of state grant awards was reduced to 15, later adding three more states, in order to increase each monetary award from \$118,000 to \$250,000. This means that many states that had participated in the program in past years have now been forced to close down their operations, leaving many unable to access brain injury care.

Increased funding of the program will provide resources necessary to sustain the grants for the 24 states currently receiving funding and to ensure funding for additional states. Steady increases over five years for this program will provide for each state including the District of Columbia and the American Indian Consortium and territories to sustain and expand state service delivery; and to expand the use of the grant funds to pay for such services as Information & Referral (I&R), systems coordination and other necessary services and supports identified by the state.

Similarly, the TBI P&A Program currently provides funding to all state P&A systems for purposes of protecting the legal and human rights of individuals with TBI. State P&As provide a wide range of activities including training in self-advocacy, outreach, information & referral and legal assistance to people residing in nursing homes, to returning military seeking veterans benefits, and students who need educational services.

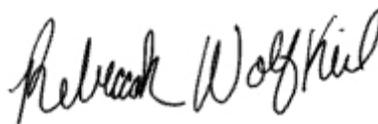
Effective Protection and Advocacy services for people with traumatic brain injury are needed to help reduce government expenditures and increase productivity, independence, and community integration. However, advocates must possess specialized skills, and their work is often time-intensive. An increased appropriation in this area would ensure that each P&A can move towards providing a significant PATBI program with appropriate staff time and expertise.

Thank you for your continued support of the TBI State Grant Program and the 5.3 individuals living with a disability as a result of a brain injury. Please feel free to contact Amy Colberg, Director of Government Affairs, Brain Injury Association of America at acolberg@biausa.org, and Becky Corby, Government Relations, National Association of State Head Injury Administrators (NASHIA) at rcorby@ridgepolicygroup.com should you have any questions or wish to discuss this further.

Sincerely,



Susan H. Connors
President/CEO
Brain Injury Association of America



Rebeccah Wolfkiel
Executive Director
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators