



October 17, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House of Representatives
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

The National Association of State Head Injury Administrators (NASHIA) is writing in support of H.R. 4334, the Dignity in Aging Act of 2019, a bi-partisan bill approved by the House Education and Labor Committee on September 18, 2019. We are pleased that the Committee adopted an amendment offered by Rep. Fred Keller that added fall-related traumatic brain injuries (TBI) to the list of conditions covered under the Older Americans Act. The committee agreed to add fall-related TBI services to the bill's definition of "disease prevention and health promotion services" and also allows existing grant programs to cover TBI screening and efforts to raise public awareness.

Older Americans are a high risk group for TBI due to falls, and, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), account for four in five (81%) of the TBI-related emergency department (ED) visits among adults aged 65 and older. Identifying a TBI among this age group is challenging due to the similarity of symptoms associated with other conditions, which also may be present at the time of the fall (e.g., dementia, stroke, dehydration). Symptoms of TBI may include problems with memory; personality changes; fatigue; headaches; dizziness; changes in sleeping patterns; and problems with language/speaking. While age and other overlaying health issues may affect treatment for a TBI, without knowledge of a TBI, clinicians, providers and caregivers may overlook strategies and accommodations that may assist an individual with subsequent problems to enable them to continue to live more functionally independent.

NASHIA is a nonprofit member organization representing brain injury state government program staff and other professionals and consumers involved in brain injury service delivery as associate members. Should you wish additional information about TBI and NASHIA, please do not hesitate to contact Rebecca Wolfkiel, Executive Director, at 202-681-7840 (execdirector@nashia.org). Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Wolfkiel, Executive Director

cc: Representative Bill Pascrell, Jr., Co-chair, Congressional Brain Injury Task Force
Representative Don Bacon, Co-chair, Congressional Brain Injury Task Force