

February 9, 2012

Senator Tom Harkin
Chairman, Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Orrin Hatch
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
104 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Harkin and Hatch:

Thank you for your previous support of the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Act. The undersigned organizations support introduction and passage in the coming months of a strong reauthorization of the TBI Act, which is set to expire in 2012. This is the only federal legislation that specifically assists states and other entities to develop and expand service delivery systems, and provide needed advocacy to meet the needs and protect the rights of individuals who have sustained a TBI and their families. TBI is a leading cause of death and disability among young Americans and continues to be one of the signature injuries of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. From the battlefield to the football field, American adults, youth and children sustain TBIs at an alarming rate. Federal assistance through TBI Act programs continues to be necessary to address this growing population.

Millions of children and adults live with a permanent disability as a result of a TBI. This includes veterans who have sustained blast injuries, youth who have sustained sports-related concussions, survivors of automobile collisions, and older Americans susceptible to falls. Every year, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that 1.7 million Americans incur a TBI. Of these, 52,000 die and 275,000 people are hospitalized. The total cost of these injuries in 2000 was approximately \$76.5 billion.

The TBI Act offers balanced and coordinated public policy in brain injury prevention, education, and research, and provides advocacy and community-based services for individuals living with TBIs and their families. Specifically, the TBI Act:

- Authorizes CDC to identify strategies to prevent TBI and implement public education programs to increase awareness and understanding of TBI;
- Authorizes the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to make grants to states to coordinate, expand, and enhance service delivery systems;

- Directs the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to conduct basic and applied research related to TBI; and
- Authorizes HRSA to make grants for the Protection and Advocacy for Traumatic Brain Injury (PATBI) program, which provides critical advocacy services to ensure that people with TBIs live full and independent lives free from abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation.

Reauthorization of the TBI Act is critical for individuals and families impacted by a TBI. Individuals who have sustained a TBI often need a complex array of services, including medical and social services and employment assistance, and the TBI Act provides for programs that allow citizens to work and live in their homes and communities. The law also authorizes programs that increase public awareness for citizens and the health community alike, so that the prevalence of TBI is reduced and the best treatment options are available across the nation. Under your leadership, the reauthorization of the TBI Act offers an opportunity to clarify and strengthen aspects of the law.

If you would like more information regarding the Traumatic Brain Injury Act, please contact Amy Colberg with the Brain Injury Association of America at 703-761-0750, Patrick Wojahn with the National Disability Rights Network at 202-408-9514, x102 or Rebecca Wolfkiel with the National Association of State Head Injury Administrators at 202-480-8901. We would be happy to discuss any questions or comments that you may have.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Neurology

American Academy of Orthotics and Prosthetics

American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

American Association of Neurological Surgeons

American Association of People with Disabilities

American Association on Health and Disability

American Association of State EMS Officials

American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine

American Dance Therapy Association

American Epilepsy Society

American Medical Rehabilitation Providers Association

American Music Therapy Association

American Occupational Therapy Association
American Physical Therapy Association
American Psychological Association
American Residential Treatment Association
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
American Trauma Society
Amputee Coalition
Association of Academic Physiatrists
Association of Rehabilitation Nurses
Blinded Veterans Association
Brain Injury Association of America
Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
Council for Exceptional Children
Epilepsy Foundation
Friends of the TBI Model Systems
Learning Disabilities Association of America
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Private Special Education Centers
National Association of Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Alcohol/Drug Abuse Directors
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Association of States United for Aging and Disability
National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence
National Council on Independent Living
National Disability Rights Network
National Rehabilitation Association
National Respite Coalition

National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services

North American Brain Injury Society

Prevention Institute

Safe States Alliance

The Arc

University of Pittsburgh Medical Center Department of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation

University of Pittsburgh Medical Center Rehabilitation Institute

VetsFirst, a program of United Spinal Association

Vietnam Veterans of America