

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 20, 2011

**SUPPORT FUNDING FOR MILLIONS OF AMERICANS
LIVING WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY**

*This is a programmatic request.
Deadline: May 11th*

Dear Colleague:

This year, 1.7 million people will sustain a traumatic brain injury (TBI) – exceeding the incidence of breast cancer, HIV, multiple sclerosis, and spinal cord injuries *combined*. Additionally, in recent years, TBI has emerged as the “signature injury” of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan—with as many as 20 percent of soldiers sustaining brain injuries. From the battlefield to the football field, TBI remains a leading cause of death and disability in both adults and youth.

The TBI Act, which was originally passed in 1996 and reauthorized in 2008, is the only federal law that specifically addresses the needs of the growing population of TBI survivors.

The programs authorized under the TBI Act provide public awareness and education through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and State TBI care capacity-building and protection, legal, referral, and advocacy services at the Health Resources and Services Administration. Furthermore, the TBI Model Systems of Care at the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) represent a vital national network of TBI research and expertise—providing the only source of non-proprietary longitudinal data on TBI experiences and a key source of evidence-based medicine.

Please join us in supporting these programs by sending the attached letter to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Ed to protect current levels of funding for programs authorized by the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Act in the FY2012 Appropriation Bills.

If you have any questions or would like to sign on, please contact Rose Hacking (rose.hacking@mail.house.gov; 5-5751) in Congressman Pascrell’s office or Marianne Myers (marianne.myers@mail.house.gov; 5-5836) in Congressman Platts’ office.

Sincerely,



Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress
Co-Chair, Brain Injury Task Force



Todd Russell Platts
Member of Congress
Co-Chair, Brain Injury Task Force

Dear Chairman Rehberg and Ranking Member DeLauro:

The undersigned members of the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force, and other supportive members of Congress, respectfully request your support by protecting current levels of funding for programs authorized by the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Act in the FY2012 Appropriation Bills. We also request your consideration for funding the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) TBI Model Systems administered by the Department of Education.

Known as the "silent epidemic," TBI continues to be the signature injury of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Furthermore, incidences are increasing here at home among our nation's civilian population. From the battlefield to the football field, TBI remains a leading cause of death and disability in both adults and youth. Primary funding to address this growing population is provided through these programs.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Injury Center is responsible for assessing the incidence and prevalence of TBI in the United States. The CDC estimates that 1.7 million TBIs occur each year and 3.4 million Americans live with a life long disability as a result of TBI. In addition, the TBI Act requires the CDC to coordinate with the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to include the number of TBIs occurring in the military. This coordination will likely increase CDC's estimate of the number of Americans sustaining TBI and living with the consequences. CDC also funds states for TBI registries, creates and disseminates public and professional educational materials, for families, caregivers and medical personnel, and has recently collaborated with the National Football League and National Hockey League to improve awareness of the incidence of concussion in sports. CDC plays a leading role in standardizing evidence-based guidelines for the management of TBI, linking civilian and military populations with TBI services, and educating primary care physicians.

The TBI Act authorizes the Health Resources and Service Administration (HRSA) to award grants to states, American Indian Consortia and territories to improve access to service delivery and to state Protection and Advocacy (P&A) Systems in order to expand advocacy services to include individuals with traumatic brain injury. For the past thirteen years the HRSA 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 FY 2009, HRSA reduced the number of state grant awards from over 40 states to 18, and increased each monetary award from \$118,000 to \$250,000. Many states that had participated in the program in past years have now been forced to close down their operations, leaving many patients unable to access brain injury care.

Adequate funding of the grant program will provide resources necessary to sustain the grants for the 18 states currently receiving funding and ensure funding for additional states. Steady increases over five years for this program would provide for each state including the District of Columbia, 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 HRSA 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. Protecting funding in this area would ensure that each P&A can move towards providing a significant PATBI program with appropriate staff time and expertise.

Funding for the TBI Model Systems in the Department of Education is urgently needed to ensure that the nation's valuable TBI research capacity is not diminished, and to maintain and build upon the 16 TBI Model Systems research centers around the country.

The TBI Model Systems of Care program represents an already existing vital national network of expertise and research in the field of TBI, and weakening this program would have resounding effects on both military and civilian populations. The TBI Model Systems are the only source of non-proprietary longitudinal data on what happens to people with brain injury. They are a key source of evidence-based medicine, and serve as a "proving ground" for future researchers.

We ask that you consider favorably these requests for the CDC, the HRSA Federal TBI Program, and NIDRR TBI Model Systems Program to further data collection, increase public awareness, improve medical care, assist states in coordinating systems, protect the rights of persons with TBI, and bolster vital research.