



**Testimony of Christina LeBeau, Director of Advocacy and Engagement at  
the Brain Injury Association of New York State, before the Joint Assembly  
and Senate Health Budget Hearing**

FEBRUARY 10, 2026

Senate Finance Chair Krueger, Assembly Ways & Means Chair Pretlow, Senate Health Committee Chair Rivera, Assembly Health Committee Chair Paulin, and members of the Joint Health Budget Committee, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony for your consideration as you review proposals with respect to the Governor's proposed 2026 – 2027 New York State Budget. My name is Christina LeBeau, and I am the Director of Advocacy and Engagement at the Brain Injury Association of New York State (BIANYS).

BIANYS advocates for brain injury survivors to help them access necessary services as they live with brain injuries. Approximately 157 traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) occur in New York State every day and TBIs result in more than 2,200 deaths, 17,000 hospitalizations, and 38,000 emergency department visits each year. Any brain injury, regardless of severity, can change the way a person thinks, acts, moves, and feels. New Yorkers with brain injuries face many problems on their journey to recovery, often falling through the cracks of the health care

system when their injuries are misdiagnosed and misunderstood. BIANYS is committed to increasing access to care for those impacted by brain injuries.

Brain injury is a public health issue impacting millions of New Yorkers every day. TBI alone outnumbers spinal cord injury, HIV/AIDS, breast cancer and multiple sclerosis diagnoses combined. Anyone at anytime, anywhere can sustain a brain injury.

People with a brain injury are often left with complex problems due to the nature of their injury. Common issues include challenges with cognition, memory and/or behavioral problems, as well as physical disabilities. These challenges make managing day to day life more difficult.

The unique problems that each person experiences, coupled with the lack of understanding of how brain injury manifests, makes community reintegration a challenge for many survivors.

Navigating the confusing structure of assistance programs, resources and benefit options can be complicated for anyone, let alone someone recovering from a brain injury. BIANYS supports brain injury survivors to help them access necessary services as they live with brain injuries. For the last two years, the final State budget has included \$300,000 towards Continuum of Care for Neuro-Resource Facilitation Program, a resource facilitation program administered by BIANYS designed to help brain injury survivors access necessary care.

To be eligible for the program, a person must be a legal New York resident who experienced a brain injury at the age 22 or above. Additionally, the person must be expected to benefit from resource facilitation services and have goals that can be accomplished through the program.

Each individual in the program has unique objectives that are tailored to their recovery and

specific experiences. Some examples of how the program assists people is through helping the enrollee in the following ways: creating safety plans, getting assistance to other public benefit programs not specific to brain injury, making connections to waiver programs, and resolving transportation issues.

We thank you the Legislature for its support of this vital program. We are asking that the Legislature not only once again include a minimum of \$300,000 in funding for this program, but also increase this funding to \$1,000,000 for fiscal year 2026 – 2027.

The previous funding for the Continuum of Care program has allowed BIANYS purchase a state-of-the-art database used to give the proper resources and fill the needs of our community, add a resource facilitator staff member, plan education for medical personnel throughout the State in discharge coordination so that BIANYS is the first point of contact for a patient after discharge from a TBI, establish priority policies, enroll over 90 people into the program from 22 counties in New York, and collect data on the needs and accomplishments of brain injury survivors and caregivers. As I noted above, this year BIANYS is seeking \$1 million in the final budget. Increasing the funding for the Continuum of Care program will allow the program to be fully funded and will best serve the needs of New Yorkers with brain injuries. With the additional funds, BIANYS will ensure that New Yorkers recovering from a brain injury receive the absolute best care and assistance available. Survivors, families and caregivers will have the information they need and will be connected to doctors, rehabilitation services and other community-based services, improving outcomes and preventing unnecessary hospitalizations

and minimizing medical complications. This funding will also allow for the tracking of necessary services which are often unavailable, to enable policymakers and stakeholders to develop such services to meet New Yorkers' needs.

A major part of the increased funding would go to increasing BIANYS staff devoted to the Continuum of Care program, allowing more individuals into the program. BIANYS would seek to increase staffing from 3 to 8 people. With over 90 people already taking advantage of this program, we need additional staffing to be sure we can coordinate care for the additional individuals that will need it.

Furthermore, the enhanced funding would increase BIANYS' prevention and outreach. This will include: (1) outreach to target populations, including youth sports, older adults and adults sustaining concussions, among others, (2) creating collateral informational materials including publications on brain injury for discharge planners to distribute to patients, (3) hosting webinars on fall prevention, recognizing brain injury and proper understanding of brain injury, (4) serving as hub for providers, community-based organizations and other entities, enabling them to reach brain injury survivors and families, (5) gathering data on brain injury incidence, severity and financial impact in New York State, (6) identifying gaps in services, (7) training doctors who treat patients with brain injury, (8) educating community-based providers with specific training on brain injury and why survivors need specialized services, (9) hosting a conference for rehabilitation team members, including medical providers and discharge planners, on best practices for recognition, treatment, rehabilitation and assisting people with

brain injury in accessing community-based support services, and (10) networking with medical and rehabilitation facilities to reach people with brain injury.

Although I could go on about the importance of the Continuum of Care program, I think it is most effective for us to give voice to those whose lives are changed by the program. Susan F., whose 41-year-old-son was in a serious motor vehicle crash and ended up transferred to a skilled nursing facility three hours away from home, has this to say about the program: "After he was placed on Staten Island, I slept in my car at night in order to be at his bedside every day. I could not afford a hotel, and the distance from home (4 hours) made it impossible to do in a day trip. I can't express what a nightmare this situation was. I was sleep deprived, terrified, and did not know what was happening or what I could do. I was so glad that a friend found out about BIANYS in March of 2024 and told me about the Continuum of Care program. Once I connected with this support, it made a huge difference in our lives. I was at a loss of what to do to get my son moved closer to home. The facility didn't listen to me, would not answer calls or respond to my e mail inquiries until a staff member from BIANYS began calling on my behalf. It was hell trying to get answers about my son's condition. Staff began changing their attitudes once BIANYS was involved. I began to be heard. I was also assisted with funding for my trips to visit through BIANYS's Samantha Goldsmith Fund which I heard about through the COC. This allowed me to visit and monitor my son's care while providing a safe hotel space for me to rest in at night. I'm happy to report that my son was transferred closer to home where family visit him frequently and can continue to support his care team as we wait and monitor his slow progress. This experience has been so emotionally draining and I can't imagine how I would

have held on to hope and energy for this length of time without the support, information, and resources from the COC."

BIANYS is uniquely positioned to administer neuro-resource facilitation while addressing individualized areas of need with a person-centered approach. BIANYS has served the brain injury community for over forty years and is recognized as a resource for brain injury information, training and support services. The existing Family Advocacy, Counseling, and Training Services (FACTS) Program provides support to survivors and their families, advocating for care and community services, working together to ensure that the best plan is in place, but only can serve those survivors whose brain injury was sustained before age 22. The Continuum of Care for Neuro-Resource Facilitation Program builds on the expertise of the current FACTS Program, making services available for survivors that sustained their injury after the age of 22. The Continuum of Care for Neuro-Resource Facilitation Program makes a significant difference in the lives of everyone impacted by brain injury, making New York State a national leader in brain injury treatment, rehabilitation and person-centered planning. Therefore, we ask that you continue to fund this program at a minimum of \$300,000 and consider fully funding this program at \$1,000,000 in the Fiscal Year 2026 -2027 State Budget.

I thank you for taking the time to consider these written remarks. If you have any questions or need more information, I can be reached at [clebeau@bianys.org](mailto:clebeau@bianys.org) or at (518) 459-7911. Thank you.