

Dear Member of the Legislature,

I am writing to you on behalf of the millions of New Yorkers impacted by traumatic brain injuries every day. Traumatic brain injury (TBI) alone outnumbers spinal cord injury, HIV/AIDS, breast cancer and multiple sclerosis diagnoses combined. I am asking you to include a \$1 million investment for Continuum of Care for Resource Facilitation for brain injury survivors in the Executive Budget. We are thankful to have received \$300,000 in last year's budget, but we are in dire need of the full \$1 million to make this program as successful as it should be.

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.

In the past four years with the COVID-19 pandemic, studies are showing that there are prolonged neurological clinical consequences related to COVID-19. A study published in The Lancet Psychiatry shows that as many as 1 in 3 COVID-19 survivors experience a mental health or neurological disorder within six months of a coronavirus infection. Now is the time to give this community a program to help them succeed after a brain injury.

Navigating the confusing structure of assistance programs, resources and benefit options can be complicated for anyone, let alone someone recovering from a brain injury. New York needs a resource facilitation system that helps brain injury survivors effectively and efficiently. This system needs to be managed by people with experience in helping survivors and meeting their unique needs.

The Continuum of Care will establish a resource facilitation to address the needs of brain injury survivors, their families, and caregivers. 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 medical care.

The prevention and outreach aspect of the Continuum of Care program will focus on preventing brain injuries while connecting survivors to resources. In addition, the funds will go toward providing support services to people with brain injury, with the goal of returning them to the least restrictive setting in their communities with all needed services in place.

The Continuum of Care program will make 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 care coordination. We urge you to include \$1 million in the budget for Continuum of Care.

Sincerely,