



Brain Injury Alliance of Oregon

Chair Prozanski and members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Sherry Stock and I have been the Executive Director of the Brain Injury Alliance of Oregon (BIAOR) for 16 years. We are a non-profit association with a mission to create a better future through brain injury prevention, advocacy, education, research and support. Our leadership represents a cross section of stakeholders in the field of brain injury including survivors, family members, clinical practitioners, researchers and service providers.

I come to you today in strong support of Senate Bill 487. This legislation will go a long way to help people who have undergone life-changing, traumatic brain injuries due to negligence of another. At the Brain Injury Alliance, we see, firsthand, the devastation a brain injury causes on the individual and his/her family. Let me share a few examples. An attorney who was a passenger in a rollover auto accident, and due to the injuries sustained she, will never be able to go back to work again. A high school senior returned to play in a football game even though he had a severe headache and had difficulty walking, was knocked out again, spent seven months in a coma, and now at 30 years old has the comprehension of a 2nd grader. A 30 year old man, rear ended at a stop light, ended up in a two week coma and will never live independently again. A man, while on a construction job, fell twenty feet and will be in assisted living the rest of his life.

It is estimated that 5.3 million American children and adults currently live with disabilities resulting from traumatic brain injuries. A vast majority of these injuries are not sustained due to the negligence of another. But for those Oregonians suffering from traumatic brain injury because of someone else's negligence, they should be guaranteed their most basic, fundamental constitutional right to hold the wrongdoer accountable in a civil court of law in front of a jury of their peers.

It's important to remember the physical, behavioral and cognitive changes that can be caused by a traumatic brain injury. Oftentimes they can result in memory loss, speech impairment, difficulty with judgement and even paralysis. Sometimes a seemingly mild brain injury will result in personality and behavior changes, which can drive away family and friends. Studies have shown over 80% of the homeless and those in prison have had brain injuries. For some survivors and their families, their lives will never be the same. It can be hard to put into perspective the life changes caused by a traumatic brain injury and the financial, physical and psychological toll it takes on everyone involved. This is why it is so critical these cases be judged on the facts of each case on a case-by-case basis.

On behalf of traumatic brain injury survivors and their families, I ask for your support of Senate Bill 487.

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