

**Testimony****Human Services Committee****Representative Damschen, Chairman****Tuesday, July 30, 2013**

**Good morning Chairman Damschen and members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Hannah Anderson and I am from Leeds, ND. I have a traumatic brain injury that I suffered from a nearly fatal car accident back in 2007, when I was just 15-years-old.**

**I am here today to talk to you about my brain injury and how it has affected almost every part of my life. It has changed who I am and who I thought I would become. Not only did I have to relearn basic things like how to breathe, how to walk and how to talk, but I also had to figure out the best ways for me to remember things. My short term memory is really bad and things that used to be easy for me, now stress me out. Mental fatigue is something I struggle with. My mind has to work twice as hard as people without a brain injury. It is hard for me to organize things, coordinate my schedule, and I struggle to make wise decisions. I am currently going to college at Trinity Bible College in Ellendale, ND, where I take 9 credits per semester. The college has an Academic Success Center, where I spend a lot of time getting assistance with my homework. I have hired a private tutor and my mother helps me break big projects down into manageable smaller projects, so that I can meet deadlines.**

**The reason that I am telling you all of this is because I am one of the lucky ones, I have someone who makes and drives me to my doctor appointments, I have someone who pays all my bills and makes sure I**

have the correct medications. I have someone who calls the insurance company when something is wrong and I have someone who I can go to when life is overwhelming for me. My mother has been my caregiver and my case manager for the past 5 years. She quit her job to stay home and take care of me and coordinates everything so that I can regain as much function as possible after my brain injury.

What happens to all of the TBI survivors out there who do not have a parent who can quit their job and become their full time advocate? There is no way that I would know where to go for help and make sure I got to the appointments and then follow the instructions that were given to me if there was not someone who could help me. There is no possible way that I could have completed all the paperwork at all the different agencies, gotten it back to them and followed through with all that they tell or ask a person to do.

People who sustain a brain injury are thrown into this world of disability without prior knowledge about how to maneuver it. There are multiple eligibility requirements in multiple agencies and this makes it difficult for people to utilize or obtain services. Getting the right follow-up and coordination of services at the right time can make a difference between independence and institutional care. People with brain injuries need someone to make sure that they can get to appointments, get the necessary medications, as well as complete all necessary paperwork. Brain injured people deserve to be able to use the resources more effectively in order to remain as independent as possible.

Having a comprehensive system of care would have given us some direction instead of running around all over the place to find the right doctor. How I wish we would have had some community supports in place after my accident. People did not know how to treat me, what to say and basically; I was just excluded from everything. I needed to find someone who could understand what I was going through.

Thank you for spending time on this study and thank you for listening to my story today.

*Hannah Anderson*

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