

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

Chairman Damschen and members of the Human Service Committee, I am Lisa Anderson and I am here today to testify as to the need for a comprehensive system of care for all those who suffer from a brain injury in North Dakota. I am also here today to speak in support of some of the other aspects of the TBI legislative study.

In 2007, our 15-year-old daughter, Hannah suffered a traumatic brain injury due to a motor vehicle accident. This event has affected our family in almost every possible way, but namely Hannah in all that she has lost and had to work for her these past 5 ½ years. I quit my job and became Hannah's full-time caregiver/case manager. I had to devote 100% of my time and attention to finding the best possible treatment for Hannah. Our family had never heard of a traumatic brain injury and we had no idea where to turn for help for our beautiful daughter. With no guidelines and no one to assist us except our trusty computer, we set out to find whatever we could to help Hannah.

If there had been a comprehensive system of care in North Dakota, we would have had some guidelines, some idea what would best help our daughter. We have traveled over 100,000 miles in the last 5 ½ years getting medical help for Hannah. A comprehensive system of care could have given us a coordinated continuum of care right from the onset of injury, through rehabilitation, to social service programs and then long-term follow-up. We are still out here running around the country to find the most appropriate care for Hannah and her traumatic brain injury.

In doing some research on my computer, it appears there are already systems in place in other states that North Dakota could look at and perhaps model our own comprehensive system of care after. We should not need to re-invent the wheel here, but rather let's see what other states have and already put in place and go from there. Florida for example has a 5 year strategic Plan of action for "Enhancing the TBI System of Care". One of the goals they identified was a Lifelong/Long-Term System of Care. (page 5 of Florida's 5-year strategic plan)

Iowa is working towards a "comprehensive, coordinated and seamless service system for persons with a brain injury." They are expanding services and increasing access. Iowa is working on a brain injury screening tool that will allow individuals to be screened at all access points in the service delivery system. Iowa is also working on increasing timely access to information, services and supports for brain injury.

Colorado has a brain injury program that includes case management. A Brain Injury Support Specialist can help with access to cognition/mental health providers, affordable care services, daily living and home services, benefits such as waiver programs as well as physical well being and health programs. To be eligible for the Colorado BI program, you have to have a medical documented TBI resulting in ongoing impairment, be a resident of Colorado and complete and return the application. We must remember to keep the eligibility requirements as basic as possible, so that all people with a brain injury can access services, not just the worst case scenarios.

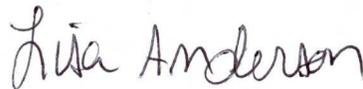
Tennessee has service coordinators that develop a comprehensive plan of care, coordinate services for individual client advocacy and bridge the gap in the service delivery system. Tennessee also has a Brain Injury Registry. All residents listed on the registry receive a letter to inform them of the services available through the TBI program. Registries can provide information on the frequency and nature of TBI disabilities. This information can help states implement cost-effective programs for people living with a brain injury. When ND gets a Brain Injury Registry, information can be quickly distributed to the family of the survivor. They will see what services are available and be able to find help for their loved one in a timely fashion.

The difficult thing about a brain injury is that no two brain injuries are alike. If you have seen one brain injury, you have seen ONE brain injury. Survivors have problems with balance, fatigue, headaches, depression, relationships, returning to school, seizures, sleep, cognitive difficulties as well as difficulty returning to work. The reason we need a comprehensive system of care is so everyone with an injury can have the best possible outcome. We were told our daughter would most likely remain in a vegetative state for the rest of her life. This fall, she will be in her 4<sup>th</sup> year of college at Trinity Bible College, in Ellendale, ND. Her dream is to be a para-professional in a school and work one on one with children with special needs.

With patience, persistence and perseverance, Hannah has come back to us in ways that we never thought possible. She is living breathing proof that people with a brain injury can relearn and can overcome some of the challenges that they face. Let's give every North Dakota citizen with a brain injury a fighting chance.

Thank you for your time today. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Lisa L. Anderson

6081 58<sup>th</sup> Ave NE

Leeds, ND 58346

701-739-6912 (cell)

[lisa.anderson@gondtc.com](mailto:lisa.anderson@gondtc.com)