

Human Services Committee
Interim 2013-2014
2013 N.D. Sess. Laws ch. 12 (HB 1012, § 16)
July 30, 2013

Good afternoon, Chairman Damschen and members of the Interim Human Services Committee. I am David Boeck, a State employee and lawyer for the Protection & Advocacy Project. The Protection & Advocacy Project advocates on behalf of people with disabilities, including disabilities that arise from brain injuries.

P&A enthusiastically commits itself to participating with the UND Center for Rural Health, the Department of Human Services, the Brain Injury Association, and other stakeholders to support this study of the need for a comprehensive system of care for individuals with brain injuries.

P&A uses federal authority to provide advocacy and protective services to individuals with traumatic brain injuries, as this group is not specifically identified in state law. P&A uses federal funds to protect individuals with traumatic brain injuries from abuse and neglect. There is no program through the Veterans Administration or otherwise available to provide protective services to veterans with traumatic brain injuries.

As in P&A's other advocacy programs, P&A advances the rights of individuals with traumatic brain injuries to live in the community with adequate supports and services and to participate as fully as possible in education, employment, and health care services. P&A helps to ensure that

individuals with traumatic brain injuries have access to voting like other citizens.

P&A has been active in educating professionals and the public to advance their knowledge of best practices in brain injury service delivery. P&A participated in a collaborative effort with key partners to put together the third annual Mind Matters Conference for professionals, consumers, family members, and advocates. This program was approved for continuing education credits for several professions.

P&A helps the court system and individuals with disabilities to construct individual justice plans. Numerous individuals with traumatic brain injuries benefit from these plans. This has stimulated discussion about the need for a veterans court to serve veterans with traumatic brain injuries and service-related mental illnesses.

P&A participated in the TBI Awareness Day at the Capitol during the legislative session to improve awareness of legislators, the public, and the media.

P&A will cooperate with the Interim Human Services Committee to advance this study. Thank you.