



MAR 12 2012

Senate of Pennsylvania

March 12, 2012

TO: ALL SENATORS

FROM: Stewart J. Greenleaf and Andrew Dinniman

SUBJECT: Cosponsorship – **Brain Injury Awareness Month**

We plan to offer a resolution designating March 2012 as “Brain Injury Awareness Month” in Pennsylvania.

Brain injury refers to the destruction or injury of brain cells and the disruption of neural pathways resulting in changes in the way a person thinks, feels and acts. Acquired brain injury is an injury to the brain secondary to trauma, stroke, post-surgical complications, aneurysm, high fever, infection, near drowning, near suffocation, near electrocution, poisoning, and other conditions which occur after birth.

The signs and symptoms of traumatic brain injury can be subtle and may not appear until days or weeks after the injury or may even be missed. Mild traumatic brain injury is often under-diagnosed or misdiagnosed, with symptoms not always immediately apparent. Traumatic brain injury is the leading cause of disability and death from birth to age 40. Over 130,000 Pennsylvanians are living with a long term disability resulting from traumatic brain injury. More than 50,000 Pennsylvanians are treated and released from emergency rooms for traumatic brain injury annually.

Traumatic brain injury is the leading cause of disability and death from birth to age 40. It is estimated that there are from 50,000 to 125,000 mild traumatic brain injuries (concussions) resulting from sports and recreation accidents in Pennsylvania every year. In 2011, the Pennsylvania Legislature passed, and the Governor signed into law the Safety in Youth Sports Act which will become effective July 1, 2012 and will reduce the effect that concussion will have on student athletes.

The brain injury community, with funding through the Pennsylvania Departments of Health and Education, has created a model program for the return of students to the classroom, called the BrainSTEPS program. The Commonwealth has excellent acute and post-acute brain injury service providers. Brain injury is the signature injury of those military personnel who have served and who are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This Commonwealth has a number of the leading research centers for brain injury, including the Penn Center for Brain Injury and Repair at the University of Pennsylvania, the Moss Rehabilitation Research Institute, the Brain Trauma Research Center at the University of Pittsburgh, and the Center for Injury Research and Prevention at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. In addition, the state has three organizations specifically devoted to brain injury including the Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania, Inc., the Acquired Brain Injury Network of Pennsylvania, and the Pennsylvania Brain Injury Coalition, as well as two organizations with a strong focus on brain injury including the Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania, and the Pennsylvania Association of Rehabilitation Facilities.

The best approach to the silent epidemic of brain injury is to promote the awareness, prevention and treatment of brain injuries. Brain injury prevention and access to necessary treatment and services can be promoted through community education and a public awareness campaign.

If you are interested in cosponsoring this resolution, please contact Pat Snively by e-mailing her at psnively@pasen.gov by the close of business on Tuesday, March 13th.