

Submitter: Bob Durston  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services  
Measure: SB420

I am writing today to support SB 420 and the creation of a Brain Injury Resource Navigation Program for our state.

Survivors of brain injuries face a daunting journey in their quest for recovery. With the proper support, many brain-injury survivors achieve a significant amount of independence and self-sufficiency. Without that support, however, brain-injury victims struggle mightily to overcome the significant obstacles that their injuries create in their lives.

For too many brain-injury survivors and their families, our health care system is an impossible labyrinth of dead ends. For any survivor, recovery is a long and difficult journey. Finding the right resources in our convoluted health care system is a challenge for all of us. It may be an insurmountable challenge for brain-injury survivors and their families who do not have advocates -- advocates who will help them find appropriate care and supportive resources.

Without help navigating the network of resources, the outcomes for these survivors are often bleak. This is very apparent in the context of our homeless population. For more than three decades I worked on the issue of homelessness, including a short stint as the Executive Director of Transition Projects (a large non-profit agency serving homeless individuals in Portland). Throughout my career, I had the opportunity to meet and work with many people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness.

My heart sank particularly low whenever I met a person with an apparent cognitive impairment due to a brain injury. Finding housing is a huge challenge for anyone who is homeless, but it often becomes an insurmountable obstacle for individuals with a brain injury related disability.

Once a brain-injured person ends up on the street, they easily become nameless shelter residents or campers. They are all too readily misdiagnosed as mentally ill or substance addicted. On the streets, these unfortunate individuals become victims of violence, addiction and deprivation, which represent further barriers to housing and stability.

The proposed Brain Injury Resource Navigation Program would be an immense aid to those brain-injury survivors and to those who seek to help them find long-term housing stability. The availability of a Brain Injury Resource Navigation Program will help prevent homelessness by helping survivors connect with appropriate resources before they slip into the hell of living on the street. An effective navigation program

will not only be an important resource for families of brain injury survivors but also for those social service agencies that attempt to rescue those survivors who have fallen through our community's safety net.

With more access to proper services and diagnostic tools, we can save money by minimizing the number of individuals who become homeless, and by providing more effective tools for agencies working with those individuals who end up on our streets through no fault of their own.

I support SB 420 and the creation of a Brian Injury Resource Navigation Program for our State. I look forward to working with state legislators to pass it into law during the 2023 Legislative Assembly.

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