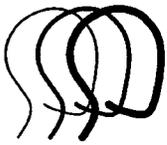


# Montana State Legislature

**Exhibit Number: 12**

**This exhibit is in regards to HB88 , It contains several different types of materials to numerous to scan. Therefore only 10 pages have been scanned to aid in your research.**

**You may view the original it is on file at the Montana Historical Society and may be observed there.**



# BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION OF MONTANA

PREVENTION · EDUCATION · ADVOCACY

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EXHIBIT

12

DATE

3-05-07

HB

808

March 5, 2007

Members of the House Appropriations Committee

Re: ██████████ Resource Facilitation Service (RFC)

Dear House Appropriations Committee Member:

For the past three years it has been my pleasure to serve as Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Brain Injury Association of Montana. Over that time, the organization has grown and it is thriving. However, in order for this group to realize its potential, we need funds to support our Resource Facilitation Services.

The Resource Facilitation Service is a program that is designed to allow people an opportunity to help themselves. The Resource Facilitation Service of the Brain Injury Association of Montana works with area hospitals to follow people who have suffered from a traumatic brain injury. When the brain injury survivor decides to participate in the program, a resource facilitator will contact that person two weeks after discharge from the hospital then again at six weeks after discharge, twelve weeks, eighteen weeks and twenty-four months after discharge from the hospital. This program merely informs people as to what services are available to assist them in dealing with their traumatic brain injury.

Unlike survivors of other physical injuries, a brain injury survivor is the least equipped person to understand problems associated with his or her condition. Without a program like RFS, brain injury survivors are left to fend for themselves and deal with the condition that they may not understand, their family members may not understand and their employers may not understand. It is this lack of understanding that is dangerous for a survivor of a traumatic brain injury.

It is not uncommon for a brain injury survivor to disregard many of the problems associated with their condition. Because the first year of treatment of a brain injury survivor is so important, failing to put these individuals in touch with rehabilitation services can allow a situation to become significantly worse than it needs to be. A program like RFS allows a bridge to be gapped between brain injury survivors and rehabilitation services that are available in his or her community.

I strongly urge you as a citizen of this State to allocate the \$300,000.00 requested by the Brain Injury Association of Montana to allow this organization to realize its potential. There are very few opportunities legislatures have to save the State money. I am completely convinced that this program will save the State money as it will put brain injury survivors in touch with much needed services making them much less likely to need public assistance in the future. For these reasons I respectfully request this Committee pass the request for \$300,000.00 for this biennium.

Very truly yours,

Lucas J. Foust

March 5, 2007

The Hon. John Sinrud, Chair  
House Appropriations Committee

**In support of funding the Resource Facilitation Service for people with traumatic brain injuries in HB ~~2008~~ 808**

Dear Rep. Sinrud and Members of the Committee,

My brother was in an accident in October. He remains in a coma. He is a single parent with two children.

I've been working on filing for Medicaid and Social Security benefits. I've been shuffled between seven different Medicaid workers and three Social Security Administration workers. I have over 300 documents from these encounters and spend countless hours on the phone leaving messages that are never returned, sending letters that are never acknowledged, and receiving conflicting information from all.

I can't help but think if I were the one with the brain injury, I would have given up long ago.

When I called RFS I was immediately given the names of three different advocacy and financial assistance programs and was mailed information that I refer to daily. RFS regularly contacts me for updates. It was the first positive encounter I'd had yet. Their office hours are limited but do include some time after 5:00 on weekdays. I'm able to talk with the RFS after hours without sacrificing my job security.

By providing the funding for the RFS, others like me will receive the help to get through this ordeal and with less suffering. Please support the thousands of Montanans impacted by brain injuries each year.

Respectfully,

Morgan Maynard  
Helena, Montana  
406-461-6643

March 5, 2007

House Appropriations Committee  
Rep. John Sinrud, Chairman

RE: HB 808, amendment to fund resource facilitation service for people with TBI

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee:

My name is Robert Snizek, I work as the case manager of the Headway Brain Injury Program affiliated with St. Vincent Healthcare in Billings, Montana. I am saddened that I can not be in Helena in person to testify in support of funding for the resource facilitation service for people with traumatic brain injury.

Saint Vincent Healthcare has given more referrals to the resource facilitation service than any other hospital in Montana. I feel strongly that this service helps to close the gaping crack that many with recently acquired brain injuries fall through. There are many people that I have met recently that went to the emergency room years ago with what was thought (at the time) to be a mild brain injury, were then discharged from the ER and sent home, only to lose their jobs shortly thereafter, to have marital problems, and to not have a recognition of what was wrong. Some with obvious brain injuries may not be aware of the impact of the injury until several months or years later.

We obviously try to do what we can to provide some compensatory strategies years after the fact, but there is not much we can really do to help these individuals. Quite frankly medical services that we offer are much more beneficial when they're given to the person while the brain is still physically healing (usually best results are obtained within an eight-month window after injury.)

Through the resource facilitation service we have been catching closed head-injury patients earlier, and helping people get the medical services that have helped them return to more productive lives, and employment.

Thanks again for considering a \$300,000 appropriation for the resource facilitation service in HB 808.

Robert Snizek, MS CRC  
St. Vincent Healthcare, Headways Program  
Billings, Montana

**Date:** March 5, 2007

**To:** Hon. Rep. John Sinrud, Chairman, House Appropriations Committee

**From:** Lois McElravy, BIAM Board of Directors and Brain Injury Survivor

**RE:** House Bill 808

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lois McElravy. I live in Missoula, Montana. I am a brain injury survivor, who is seventeen years post injury. I am serving my seventh year as a member of the board for the Brain Injury Association of Montana (BIAM).

Brain injuries don't happen to people. Brain injuries happen to families. **Brain injuries destroy lives and shatter families.**

Knowledge and resources for persons affected by brain injury are more available today than seventeen years ago. **Sadly, the ability for brain injury survivors to connect to those resources is still a major quandary.**

**The Resource Facilitation Service (RFS) has the potential to restore lives and preserve families.** Particularly since the RFS provides information and links to resources for the survivor, AND family members, or care givers and even professionals.

Fortunately for me, my attorney took the lead to ensure that I was properly diagnosed and he then coordinated a team of professionals to aid in my rehabilitation. Initially, doctors told me that two years post injury was the best I could hope to recover, outside of compensatory strategies and systems. I had four miserable, "want to go to sleep and never wake up years," followed by another eight years of "neutral."

**Twelve years post injury, my brain started to function at a higher level. Doctors tell me it is the result of my daily effort of doing many small things, consistently, over a long period of time.**

Others I've met who were brain injured at the same time I was, who did not have the same **privilege of long term care** that I received have not advanced in their recovery. Many have lost their families and homes, and live a life of isolation.

**The RFS is Montana's only toll-free information clearinghouse and self-advocacy support service for individuals and families living with brain injury. Without state funding, this service will have to close next summer.**

**Please support the approval of House Bill 808, for \$300,000 to continue the RFS service during the 2008-2009 biennium.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lois McElravy, 6746 Linda Vista Blvd, Missoula, MT 59803 406.251.2887

House Appropriations Committee  
Rep. John Sinrud, Chairman

**Funding for resource facilitation service for people with traumatic brain injury**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee,

I am Shawna Mickel from Helena Montana. I am a member of the Helena Brain Injury Support Group.

I urge you to support funding the Resource Facilitation Service in HB 808 for people with brain injuries.

When I was released from the hospital after my brain injury, I had no aftercare, no physical therapy, and no help coping with my physical limitations.

As an example, when I showered I couldn't remember if I had shampooed or conditioned my hair. I would keep repeating the shower details until I got so upset I started crying and got out of the shower. It took me several weeks to figure out a system where I marked down on a board when I that I had shampooed and then conditioned my hair in the shower. This way I knew I had completed it.

If I would have had something like the Resource Facilitation Service, they could have directed me to programs to help me with therapy, medications and life coping skills.

I urge you to support funding for the RFS so people don't have to go through the personal frustrations I went through on my own.

Thank you.  
Shawna Mickel, Helena, Mt.

March 5, 2005

Hon. Rep. John Sinrud, Chairman, House Appropriations Committee

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

I'm Jim Mickelson. 15 years ago, I was a Professional Firefighter for Missoula Rural Fire District. While returning to a fire at 4 am, my fire truck was hit by a train. I was in a semi-coma at St. Patrick Hospital for about a week and transferred to Rehab at Community Hospital Center when I could breathe on my own and swallow on my own. It took 3 months of rehab to learn how to talk and walk. Many other deficits have taken many years to improve. I still don't run, jump, work or drive. I'm still improving because of my strong tenacity to improve.

For years, I was oblivious to my abilities or lack of abilities. My brain just would not accept that I didn't know what I thought I did. After 8 years of trying to help me improve, my wife felt that separation with divorce was the only answer. Dr. Ross recommended Community Bridges Rehabilitation Program. Thank God I finally got the help I needed to pull my life together and attempt to be the husband my wife longed for and the father my 4 boys could look up to.

I should not have needed to wait 8 years worth of hell to find resources to help me. Had the Resource Facilitation Service been available then, my life would have been spared many trials and painful memories. Not to mention the pain and suffering my wife and children went through.

Following my return home I started volunteering at Community Hospital Rehabilitation, visiting brain injury and stroke patients. It was very rewarding helping those patients learn that there was hope after rehab. I've been volunteering there for over 5 years now.

In the last couple of years with all of the insurance and Medicare/ Medicaid cutbacks, it saddens my heart so much when I continually see patients sent home much sooner than they need to be. Most of these folks go home with very little knowledge of the resources available for continued care. This has greatly shown me the special need for the resource facilitation service, which allows many patients to learn the resources available throughout our state.

I run two Brain Injury Support Groups here in Missoula. The monthly "Missoula Brain Injury Support Group" and the weekly "Puzzle Club". Both groups demonstrate the need for continued support for people with brain injuries weather they come from trauma, aneurisms, tumors or stroke. Folks need to know about these options and the many other resources available throughout Montana

Please consider supporting the Resource Facilitation Service by appropriating \$300,000 in HB 808. You'll be glad you did.

Thank you for hearing one brain injury survivor's plea.

Retired (not by choice) engineer Jim Mikelson  
2550 Roundup Drive  
Missoula, Montana 59808

March 5, 2007

In support of funding the Resource Facilitation Service for people with traumatic brain injuries in HB808

Chairman and members of the committee,

I help facilitate the Helena Brain Injury Support Group. My son suffered a brain injury in 1999.

A brain injury is devastating to the individual and the family. A person who has suffered a brain injury can have problems with memory, concentration, basic living skills, poor judgment, difficulty making decision, headaches, dizziness, and more. The injured person oftentimes does not know what is the matter or where to go for help dealing with the problems. My son needed help with all these problems, plus help to be successful at school. He needed help to deal with the depression, anger and suicide issues that came up. He needed a lot of help and support to be successful in his life and to face these challenges.

Montana has one of the highest incidents of brain injuries in the nation. In addition, many military people are and will be returning from war with brain injuries.

The Resource Facilitation Service that would be funded in HB808 is modeled after the plan used in Minnesota. They documented these results for RFS:

- A rate of return to work at twice the national average

- An increased likelihood that children receive appropriate educational supports

- Increased family support and understanding and decreased family crisis

- Reduced long-term dependence on public assistance

- A reduced risk of institutionalization.

People with brain injuries need help dealing with their unique difficulties. We need to provide that help and the Resource Facilitation Service is a means to provide those services for the injured and their families.

Thank you.

Karen Cyr

Helena, Mt. 406-449-2538

March 5, 2007

To: the Honorable Representative John Sinrud, Chair, House Appropriations Committee

I am asking you to please fund the Resource Facilitation Service for brain injury in HB 808 by appropriating \$300,000 for the biennium. Survivors of brain injury and their families need any and all forms of support that they can get.

Following a traumatic brain injury, the worlds of the brain-injured and their families are turned upside down. Life as it was known prior to a brain injury ceases to exist, and the brain-injured enters a whole new world.

There is an extreme amount of confusion, questioning, and searching for answers, and this can be exhaustive and frustrating. Many people are completely overwhelmed by the new world of brain injury, and they may not be aware of or have the knowledge to access information about social services/programs that could prove to be beneficial to them. With someone to assist in finding pathways to medical help, rehabilitation services, Social Security and medical (Medicare/Medicaid) benefits that the brain injured is eligible for, the brain injured can have a smoother path to solving problems and thus re-establishing some quality in their lives.

Because of the many confusing issues that face a brain-injured survivor and their limited ability to independently cope with these, supports must be in place. Supports for the brain-injured and his family help to preserve family unity, assist the brain-injured in returning to the work force, reduce reliance on public assistance, and allow the brain-injured to retain a positive feeling of contributing to his life in a qualitative manner. In the long run, this support and education will save everyone money and assist the brain-injured to get back on his feet.

It is possible for a person to leave the hospital and/or terminate any necessary medical care relating to an injury without realizing they may have a traumatic brain injury. Brain injuries cannot always be detected in their early stages. Because the survivors may not appear to be injured since there may not be any visible signs of trauma or injury, this has been labeled "the silent epidemic". For the survivors and their families to understand their situations and work through them, others must be involved in their lives. This is where the Resource Facilitation Service could play an important role in their lives.

Without the Resource Facilitation Service we could lose the only toll-free, statewide resource we have for brain injured survivors and their families. To let such a service fall by the wayside is something that Montanans cannot afford to have happen. I urge you to support this service by assuring that the proper funding will be made available in HB 808.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and consider our needs.

Sincerely,

Michael P. Sullivan  
2004 Third Avenue North  
Great Falls, Mont. 59401

Sat, March 3, 2007

To the Hon. Rep. John Sinner,  
Chair, House Appropriations Committee + Committee Members,

My name is Tony Kolnik. I'm writing to ask support for Funding of Resource Facilitation Service (RFS) in HB 808.

The RFS helps preserves families, helps people return to work successfully + reduces reliance on public assistance in many cases. I would share with you, I'm presently employed full-time (Paying Taxes) + enjoying my wife, Teri (married 30+ yrs) + family (3 Kids), as well as helping/assisting others in Helena's Brain Injury Community.

The R.F.S. was previously funded by a Federal grant. Please look past the fact R.F.S began with Federal \$\$ and view R.F.S. for Montana as something, helping reduce reliance on Montana Public assistance,  
Preserving Families, Marriages  
Helping People return to some form of work.

I benefitted from R.F.S + my family also did. Please fund in HB 808 for R.F.S, Please.

Best Regards,

Tony Kolnik (TONY KOLNIK)  
658 N. Warren  
Helena, Mt 59601

To: House Speaker Scott Sales, Appropriations Chairman John Sinrud, Rep. Edith Clark, Rep. Ray Clark, Rep. Eve Franklin and other House members

My name is Mark Sanders and I've spoken with you before this session on the vital need to fund the Resource Facilitation Service provided by the Brain Injury Association of Montana. As you know, this service was started with the help of federal grants, which have ended.

I am writing today to ask you to fund RFS with a \$300,000 appropriation for the next biennium

I am a brain injury survivor and I am on the Montana Brain Injury Association Board of Directors. We are determined to keep RFS going until it becomes state-funded. But if the funding doesn't come through, we will not have the resources to maintain it.

The high rate of brain injuries is staggering; spinal cord injury and breast cancer combined do not equal the number of brain injuries. Now thousands of soldiers are returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with brain injuries. Without the Resource Facilitation Service, which guides new brain-injured survivors to where they can go for services, where should we send the new brain injury survivors who are returning home with undiagnosed brain injuries?

RFS helps people with brain injuries figure out what to do and where to go. It helps people help themselves and makes them feel less alone.

The RFS is a resource for everyone in Montana, including legislators. You will want to be able to give the RFS number to the people who voted for you, when they ask you for help. Here is that number: 800-241-6442, or 541-6442 in Missoula. Please help us keep this resource going.

Thank you for your time.

Mark Sanders  
3000 Villard, #25  
Helena, Montana 59624