

## **2026 Legislative and Community Priorities**

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**Brain injuries affect more than 2.5 million children and adults across the United States each year.** Any brain injury — regardless of severity — can alter the way a person thinks, acts, moves, and feels. Brain injuries can happen to anyone, at anytime, anywhere. New Yorkers living with brain injuries often face significant challenges on their road to recovery, frequently falling through the cracks of a health care system when their injuries are misdiagnosed or misunderstood.

**The Brain Injury Association of New York State (BIANYS)** advocates on behalf of brain injury survivors to ensure that everyone has access to the services, supports, and care they need. Our legislative priorities for 2026 are highlighted below.

### **2026 Budget Priorities**

- **Continuum of Care for Neuro-Resource Facilitation Program:**
  - This program is administered by BIANYS and designed to help brain injury survivors access necessary care. To be eligible for the program, a person must be a legal New York resident who experienced a brain injury at the age 22 or above. Each participant develops an individualized plan with the goal of receiving the highest benefits from BIANYS' resource facilitation team. The program helps participants create safety plans, access public assistance programs and waiver programs, and help resolve other emergent issues. To date, 35 individuals across 22 counties are enrolled in the program.
  - The FY 2024-2025 and FY 2025-2026 State Budgets each included \$300,000 to fund this crucial program. **We are requesting at least \$300,000 is allocated for this program in the FY 2026-2027 State Budget.** Many brain injury survivors are impacted by the recent federal cuts and changes to Medicaid. They need assistance navigating those changes. This funding would allow BIANYS to have some degree of certainty regarding funding during such extraordinary times, as well as a linkage of support for those impacted by these cuts.
  - Full funding of \$1,000,000 is needed to scale operations, expand outreach and prevention efforts, and ensure that more survivors and families are reached at their most urgent times of need. Any increase beyond \$300,000 would enable BIANYS to provide more comprehensive professional training, serve as a hub for community-based support, and enhance New York's
- **Continued Funding for Concussion Outreach Prevention & Education (COPE):**
  - The COPE program is a partnership between BIANYS and the NYS Athletic Trainers Association, designed to prevent concussions and teach others to recognize concussion signs and symptoms. COPE primarily targets K-12 schools, seeking to train students, faculty, and parents on the impact of concussions on student's abilities to understand, learn, participate in athletics, and interact in educational and social settings.
  - Fourteen COPE presentations occurred in the fall of 2025, with half being in-service training sessions requested by schools. These presentations reached approximately 600 people. We also

released two online educational modules, Management of concussions and Assessment of Concussions, reaching 885 individuals.

- The FY 2025-2026 State Budget included \$175,000 to fund COPE. **We request \$175,000 in the FY 2026-2027 State Budget to continue to fund this important program.**

### **Legislative Priorities**

- **Support: S5499-A (Updating School Concussion Management):**

The 2011 Concussion Management Awareness Act (CMAA) created important safeguards and guidance for New York's public schools to protect students who suffer concussions, ensuring they do not return to athletics or other high-risk activities too soon after a concussion and risk reinjury. This legislation would update the CMAA to codify State Education Department guidance that students should return to the classroom with no limitations before they resume athletic activities. The bill would also allow physician assistants and nurse practitioners to approve a student's return to athletic activities. The bill would also expand the list of professionals authorized to be on a concussion management team to include the school principal, guidance counselor, teacher, or district medical director.

### **Community Priorities**

- **Community Housing:** Expanding and increasing housing options for younger individuals impacted by brain injury to ensure they can live safely and independently within their communities.
- **Increased Services and Supports:** Strengthening access to essential services, including expanded transportation options, telehealth availability, and respite care for families and caregivers.
- **Education and Awareness:** Enhancing education for the New York State Workers' Compensation Board and other state entities on the complexities of brain injury to improve outcomes for injured workers.
- **Access to Rehabilitation:** Ensuring timely access to rehabilitation services across the continuum of care, supported by increased provider knowledge and understanding of brain injury.

#### **For more information:**

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## **THE VOICE OF BRAIN INJURY**

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