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Good afternoon, my name is Lee Glynn. I survived a hemorrhagic stroke 5 years ago that left me with a significant brain injury. I would like to speak in support of the Biennial Budget with regard to Brain Injuries. It is my understanding that "core supports", a discretionary item within the OADS budget, includes services that I view as crucial to the brain injury community in Maine. You see, 5 years ago I went to bed as a healthy, active 63 year old farmer in Mercer, Maine. A tiny blood vessel began to leak within my brain the next morning. And my life changed gears. When I came to, I was flat on my back, in an acute rehab hospital. I had no feeling on the right side of my body as if a line had been drawn down the middle. I was unable to dress, walk or use the bathroom alone. I showered one handed in a chair with a nurse in attendance. And I couldn't see my life going forward. Everything I planned, every dream, was over. My family removed my firearms before I was discharged, in a wheelchair and dependent on others for nearly everything.

It was against this backdrop that I discovered one of those "core supports" in the form of a brain injury support group in Brewer, which was the closest to me at the time. In that group I was surrounded by people who needed no explanation, they understood. That 1 hour meeting helped me begin to turn the corner, to believe that life could go on after a terrible and pervasive injury. Today, there are 19 support groups serving Maine, with more planned. On that same day, I was introduced to Sarah Gaffney from BIAA and in the ensuing years, I attended Maine's Brain Injury Resource Fair and the annual Brain Injury conference in Portland both also part of the "core supports". Maine now also offers a helpline and neuro-resource navigation, again, under that core supports heading. I would be remiss if I failed to thank this standing committee for supporting the brain injury community in the past, you may not realize it, but you are lifesavers!

Finally, I would urge that these core supports be added as a line item going forward. Maine has made wonderful gains in supporting those with brain injuries, in my opinion, now it is time to protect those gains. Please help ensure that these critical services will continue by taking these core supports from discretionary to a line item.

Thank you.