

**VETERANS & SENIORS COMMITTEE**

**of the**

**SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**

**Verbatim Transcript**

A regular meeting of the Veterans & Seniors Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on Wednesday, September 9, 2009.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Leg. Steven Stern, Chairman  
Leg. Jack Eddington, Vice Chair  
Leg. Kate M. Browning  
Leg. Ricardo Montano  
Leg. Jay Schneiderman

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

Sarah Simpson, Assistant Counsel  
Tom Ronayne, Director of Veterans Service Agency  
Renee Ortiz, Clerk  
Barbara LoMoriello, Clerk  
Paul Perillie, Aide to Majority Leader  
Linda Bay, Aide to Minority Leader  
Deborah Harris, Aide to Leg. Stern  
Rob Calarco, Aide to Leg. Eddington  
Josh Slaughter, Aide to Leg. Browning  
Bob Martinez, Aide to Leg. Montano  
Catherine Stark, Aide to Leg. Schneiderman  
Debra Alloncius, AME Legislative Director  
Allyson Scerri, Founder, New Beginnings  
Kate DiMeglio, Co-chair, Fundraiser, New Beginnings  
Deborah Soehngen, Committee Member, New Beginnings  
Anthony Mastroianni, Brain Injury patient, New Beginnings.  
Domenick Ercolano, VFW Post Quarter Master  
And all other interested parties

**Verbatim Transcript Taken By:**

Gabrielle Skolom, Court Stenographer

*[The meeting was called to order at 9:12 A.M.]*

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Welcome to the Committee on Veterans and Seniors. Please rise and join us for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Montano.

**[Salutation]**

I'd ask everyone to please remain standing and join us in a moment of silence for former Suffolk County Legislator John Foley who recently passed away. We keep him and his father and mother in our thoughts and prayers. We also just got word a moment ago that a Huntington Manor firefighter lost his life recently in the line of duty. We appreciate him and his family and all of our brave men and woman fighting for our freedoms overseas. Thank you.

**[Moment of Silence Observed]**

Okay. Good morning, everybody. Thank you for being here on this special day and time. We are going to go directly into introductory resolutions.

**Introductory Resolutions**

**IR 1732-2009, Approving the appointment of Jeanmarie Brand as a member of the Senior Citizens Advisory Board (County Executive).** I understand that Ms. Brand is not with us this morning, so I'll offer a motion to table. Second by Legislator Montano. All in favor? Any opposed? Any abstention? **Motion carries.**

**[VOTE: 3-0-0-2, Legislators Browning & Eddington, not present]**

**IR 1746-2009, Accepting and appropriating 100% reimbursable funds for the End of Life Care Program (County Executive).** This is 100%, so I'll make a motion to approve and place on the consent calendar.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Second.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Second by Legislator Montano. All in favor? Any opposed? Any abstention? **Motion carries.**

**[VOTE: 3-0-0-2, Legislators Browning & Eddington, not present]**

Okay. That is good for our resolutions. Thank you to my colleagues, once again, for being here at this special time. I appreciate it.

Let's see. Director Ronayne.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Members. Thank you, as always, for the invitation to appear before you. I actually don't have a great deal of material to cover. There are two things that, obviously, on the agenda this morning, we have the representatives from New Beginnings, which I have met with, and I find very interesting the program they're planning to outline for you here this morning in their presentation, and I wish them all the -- all success in their effort.

The other thing that I would like to make sure that we remind everybody of is that on Saturday, September 26th at 12 noon across the street at Armed Forces Plaza at the Dennison Building, we will be dedicating the Suffolk County Gold Star Families Monument, which I'm hopeful that you've all, by now, received your invitations. But we would hope that all of you would make an effort to

attend and join us there for what I consider to be an extremely important and very significant monument. We certainly owe the family members and the survivors of our brave service members who have made the ultimate sacrifice the respect and the acknowledgement that this monument will finally provide.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Once again, that day and time?

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

September 26th, which is a Saturday at 12 noon, Armed Forces Plaza, rain or shine.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

How long is that? How long is the ceremony or the dedication?

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

We expect the presentation with the unveiling remarks from a limited number of individuals because of the nature of the event, but we're projecting 1:30 as the approximate end of the program.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Tom, just one other thing I want to throw out there: We had a conversation yesterday, I believe, in Public Works once again discussing the issue of the Merchant Marine display, and we came up with a couple of ideas going back and forth, and it appears as though some of the ideas we had been discussing yesterday just won't be possible to carry out. So I'm wondering if we could, once again, raise this as an issue with the Veterans Advisory Board because there is a pending resolution that had been proposed by Legislator Cooper, and right now that is being held in abeyance until we can have a more meaningful conversation with all those that are interested in this as an issue. So I'm hoping that this is an issue that could once again be brought up to our Advisory Board because I certainly would not want to proceed without them as being a part of it, so I'm hoping that we could continue on that conversation.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

We are actually scheduled to reconvene this Thursday. We break for the summer. The County Executive's Veterans Advisory Board will reconvene this Thursday, then I'd be happy to put this before them for consideration or reconsideration.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Thank you.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

All right. Very good. As the Director had mentioned, we have visitors with us today from -- New Beginnings is the program. Let me invite them up to say, "Welcome." Good morning. Before you begin, if each of you could just state your name for the record so we can get it all down.

**MS. SCERRI:**

Allyson Scerri.

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

Hi. Good morning. My name is Kate DiMeglio.

**MS. SOEHNGEN:**

Hi. I'm Deborah Soehngen.

**MR. MASTROIANNI:**

My name is Anthony Mastroianni.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

All right. Good morning. Thank you so much for being with us today.

**MS. SOEHNGEN:**

Thank you all for having us and giving us the opportunity to speak with you. As I said, I'm Deborah Soehngen. Personally, I am the mother of two military sons. One is a Navy Reservist at Kings Point Academy, and the other one is currently serving overseas in Iraq. He is a Sergeant in the Marine Corps doing his second tour over there. With that said, obviously Veterans services are something that -- a topic that directs my family specifically.

But we are here to talk about New Beginnings, which is a nonprofit organization, and we are in the process of breaking ground on a state-of-the-art outpatient facility in Medford, which is specifically geared toward treating veterans and civilian patients with traumatic brain injury, TBI, as well as physical disabilities and dementia. So you can see why we're happy to be speaking to this specific Committee because we will certainly have a direct impact on both veterans as well as seniors.

Speaking of veterans and seniors, I would like to introduce a gentleman who is not only a veteran and a senior, a former appointed public official, but he's also a wonderful success story of someone who has suffered and overcome a TBI. Anthony Mastroianni was the Suffolk County Public Administrator for 27 years, retiring in 1997. And in 1998, Anthony was injured at the age of 68 years old, and after two brain surgeries, here he sits at age 79, seemingly just as healthy as you or I, and he is a true inspiration to many people, and I just love the guy. It is my honor to introduce Anthony Mastroianni.

**MR. MASTROIANNI:**

Thank you very much. It's nice to see some of my old friends here today again. As Deborah mentioned, I am a veteran, and as you can see, I am a senior citizen, and I became a senior citizen against all odds. And I retired as Public Administrator after serving 27 years. And having been in the service, I served in the Korean War, not in Korea, but all overseas. And I worked in construction for over 20 years and never sustained a major injury. And one day, as good a guy as I was, I was coming out of church, Saint Pat's at Huntington, and tripped in a pothole and went to a hospital because I had had an injury, and I was misdiagnosed for three months. Nobody realized that I had a subdural hematoma.

And for most people, their life span is between, you know, 24 hours and maybe 48 hours after you have such a -- sustained such a thing as Dr. Atkins and recently I believe an actress by the name of Richardson, within 24 or 48 hours, they passed. After being misdiagnosed for three months, I finally went to a doctor that realized what I had, and I went to North Shore Hospital for an operation, and they operated, and it wasn't successful. They had to perform another operation four days later, and I had like, they told me at my age, a five percent chance of surviving, and I tell you this because I did survive even though they told me I may lose my speech; I'd lose my ability to walk; and it took me a long time to recuperate, which I did. And I say that because there's always hope. No matter how bad a situation is, there is always hope.

I was fortunate enough to have, even though when I talk about being misdiagnosed, the medical profession was really great. And I have to say the care of my family was just as good. After a long time, I did recuperate, and today, there's -- I show little or no signs. After a few years, I saw an article where John Cooper was involved with the Brain Injury Association. I called him, and through his office, I met Kate, who is the president of the organization, and I became a director of that organization, and I've been helping people who are less fortunate than I.

Most people who have brain injuries become incapacitated, either stuck at home or in a wheelchair. Having been a veteran, I also had a concern for veterans to see if we could help them. Finally, after meeting Allyson Scerri and the New Beginnings, I could see that there is an opportunity where private money has gotten together -- their own money -- to put up facilities where people could get help. And I have joined them to see what I can do to help them. And I tell you my story because we can identify because it could happen to anybody, and even though I was a public official, it didn't stop me from getting a hard fall. I appreciate the opportunity to be able to present a situation to you, and I hope that we can have an open dialogue and that you can be of assistance to people who are in great need. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

And thanks so much for being with us today. I appreciate it.

**MS. SOEHNGEN:**

Thank you, Tony. Just a quick introduction -- I know Tony started. To my immediate right, Kate DiMeglio is a mom and caretaker for a severely brain-injured son. She is the president of the Long Island Chapter of the Brain Injury Association of New York. She has been instrumental in the fight to bring awareness about TBI. She is a strong advocate for survivors and their family. Not only does she run a hotline help line, but she also runs two support groups as well, including many fundraising efforts along with Allyson Scerri.

Allyson Scerri is the founder of New Beginnings. Allyson's father suffered TBI at age 67, but she'll tell you more about their experience. About a year ago, she developed the concept of this facility, and not only has her family personally donated the land of which the facility is going to be built, but she is personally funding the building construction costs. So obviously she has a strong belief in what she's doing.

These two women are out there constantly pounding the pavement. They have met with many political leaders. They're out there spreading the word, getting as much backing as possible. Their efforts have been nonstop in making New Beginnings come to fruition. And you know what? Here it is. It's coming. It's happening. I couldn't be more proud of them. Their enthusiasm is certainly contagious, and I'd like to just introduce my friends, Allyson and Kate.

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

Hi. I'm a little bit new at this so -- thank you very much for having us here. My name is Kate DiMeglio. And my son, on his 21st birthday, went out to celebrate his 21st birthday, and he never came home. He was in a terrible car accident, which left him severely brain damaged. He was the in a vegetative state for one year and in a nursing home for two. When I did go looking for resources for my son, I found that there were none. I finally brought him home, and for seven years, I searched and I searched for someone to please help my son because he was so severely brain damaged. I didn't know where to go, where to turn. There was nothing.

I did find a few good people, thank goodness, which at this point now, my son has come around cognitively. He is still quadriplegic. He can't speak. He's totally dependent, but he's there cognitively. And this past February, I'm proud to say, I went over to Saint Charles Rehab, and they did admit him for about three or four months to help him get his body back working, which he has succeeded to a point, but then it stopped. So -- because they felt that he reached his goal, so on and so forth, and this is the problem that we have been reaching this whole time.

But I guess -- I met Allyson through one of my support groups. She called for help. I told her to come to the support group. We became very close. Her father sustained a brain injury from a motorcycle accident, and one day, we got to talking. We talked about our dream about opening up a facility that would help people, and the dream became a conversation, and the conversation became a goal, and now, the goal is going to become a reality which we definitely believe in, and that will be New Beginnings. And I think the concept here is to have long-term rehabilitation. With all the other rehabilitations, it's either acute or subacute, and after that, there is nothing. There is

nothing for any of these people.

See, in my son's case, what happened was it took him so long to reach each point of his, you know, rehab, and nobody was willing to help. With New Beginnings that wouldn't be an issue. We would understand each individual, what each individual would need. So also the problem is with the vets coming home from the wars, it's the -- brain injury is signature of both wars of Afghanistan and Iran, and when they come home, there's very minimal, minimal resources. A lot of these young men and women go undiagnosed, and nobody knows what's wrong with them. Here, we would have expert doctors that will be able to help them, evaluate them and tell them what's wrong and to be able to put them in all kinds of programs.

Also for senior citizens, 30% of our senior citizens fall and sustain a brain injury each year. And this -- we would also help our senior citizens. And I think basically, that's about it. You know, New Beginnings would be the key that is missing, and that's long term. And we would just help everybody. We'd have all different kinds of programs geared. We'd have the latest state-of-the-art equipment that would help on a continuous basis. We'd have cognitive, also, resources for them. We'd have socialization. We'd also be geared towards the vets and starting support groups for them and their families and their siblings so they could help them understand what's going on, so on and so forth. And I think that's basically about it. And I guess I'm going to turn it over to Allyson, who is the founder of New Beginnings.

**MS. SCERRI:**

Thank you, everybody, for being here and for listening to our stories, our passion and how we all got started. My personal story is in 1991, my mother was tragically killed in a car accident. A 17-year-old driver, who just got his license, made a wrong turn, and my father, who was driving the car, never was the same after that. He suffered a lot of post-traumatic stress disorder, a lot of survivor guilt. And throughout the years, as a family member, I saw the distress and the difficulties that came along with this disorder.

In 2007, February, I received a phone call. My father became a high-risk taker, part of self-medicating with the post-traumatic stress disorder and sort of became a little careless, wasn't wearing his helmet in Florida. And by the time I got the call, he was being wheeled in for brain surgery. Didn't think he would make it. His chances were very slim. When I flew to Florida, the world of brain injury was upon my family. I don't think there are any words to describe what it's like to see somebody that you love with their brain injured. They need to learn how to walk, talk. There's a lot of anger involved. And it's just -- most of the time, the diagnosis is to go into a nursing home.

So we brought my father home with us to live, and we started rehabilitation for him and searched everywhere. We found aquatherapy. We had to drive an hour each way, twice a week so he could regain balance back. We looked into hyperbaric oxygen chambers to reconnect brain cells that may still be alive. We looked into emotional support groups for family, counseling for my father. And what I found was that there are really not -- there wasn't a lot out there, and if there is, it's not all in one place. So my thoughts were, "Wouldn't it be great if there could be one building with all these therapies together and a great place for families to be while their loved one's recovering?" So we had a piece of property in my family, and I said, you know, "Why don't we take that piece of property and see what we can do?" And it was a little over a year ago that we started our mission. And we organized our 501 not-for-profit and met some great people along the way who have been unbelievably helpful.

My father has recovered to the point where he's walking with a walker. He has a quality of life. We sit at the table. We have dinner together. I have my father back. Will he live on his own? I'm not sure. But if other families can find it as easy as we did with being able to stay home and having everything available, they don't have to listen to the words, "Well, you've plateaued and there's nothing more we can do." Those words don't exist in our language because we want to change that, and we want to help.

And along that, came my discovery about the veterans, and my passion was even more ignited when I found out the statistics of the men who are coming home that have this post-traumatic stress disorder and don't know why their memories aren't right. And all these things are going on because brain injury is such a silent epidemic, and it's not going to be silent anymore because we are really going to not talk about this; we're going to do it.

So we are asking, for everybody out there, advice. We're new. We need help. We are trying to raise money for the equipment that's going in the building. We are fundraising. We're just looking for donations anyway we can, and I think if we all work together, you definitely have strength in numbers. So thank you for this opportunity.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Allyson, thank you. I'm sure my colleagues will have questions for you as well. I have a few. First of all, let me first say congratulations and thank you. The stories are moving, and what you've been able to do so far in a very short period of time is pretty impressive.

**MS. SCERRI:**

And we will also be tri-care.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

That was going to be one of my questions, actually.

**MS. SCERRI:**

Yes. And that's some that we're very proud of so we can be there for the veterans.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Kate, you really put it quite perfectly when you say -- it sounds from what you are all saying together, that this really could be very much a missing key in the spectrum of care. I've, myself, spent many, many years in my professional life representing the elderly and those families who have loved ones with special needs. And I can tell you from that type of firsthand experience that so many families, hundreds and hundreds, if not thousands of families, all over Long Island have loved ones that can only receive the kind of care that they need having suffered from TBI or PTSD in New Hampshire or Ohio or the Carolinas or Pennsylvania. I've heard the stories over and over again for 15 plus years about how that type, this type of care just is not available here in our local community, and that's wrong. Not only is that wrong, but particularly when you're talking about returning veterans who are not able to get the care that they need in their own community, well, that should be unacceptable to all of us. And so to see this type of a program right here in our backyard really is something very special.

And on a side note, my father suffers from TBI. And it's something that we as a family continue to deal with everyday. He will no longer be able to live on his own, and so I'm sure you can all appreciate and tell it better than myself, but it's one thing to help guide families for 15 years on how to deal with the challenges. But when you're dealing with it in your own family, it is something that is very, very different.

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

Yes.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

So I wish you all the very best of luck. I do have a question -- a few questions about the particular program. Where in Medford is it going to be?

**MS. SCERRI:**

We're right on the south side of the Expressway where the Brookhaven Movie Theater was on the service road there.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Oh, very good. Very good. And what are you -- at this point, what are some of the obstacles that you need to deal with, and what is your timing?

**MS. SCERRI:**

Well, we're ready to break ground. We're just waiting for the Board of Health, the one last permit, and we're ready to go. We have builders lined up.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Very good. That's a permit that's already been submitted to the Department Of Health?

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

Yes.

**MS. SCERRI:**

Yes.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

You're just waiting to hear back from them?

**MS. SCERRI:**

Yes.

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

And our speculation is to be up and running by spring of 2010.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Very good.

**MS. SOEHNGEN:**

And as far as obstacles and what we need, publicity would certainly help. Letting people know, letting your constituents know, funding for the equipment. I mean, obviously the equipment is very expensive, so grants which we are certainly actively seeking them, but we certainly welcome anything that you might know about that we don't about, you know? So grants and funding, support from the communities and any new ideas and suggestions; you know, we certainly welcome it all.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

What is your projected capacity?

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

That's a very good question, because we really don't have any statistics on how many TBI survivors are really out there. Nobody has ever really done any research that way. So we know there's a lot. I know that's a silly word, but we just really -- we're working on it, though. We're going to try to come up with a good percentage, but I really don't know. But it is a good question.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

And you have plans right now for the physical structure?

**MS. SOEHNGEN:**

Yes. It's an outpatient facility. They're not going to be housed there.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

It's strictly on outpatient facility that's going to provide long-term services --

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

Correct.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

-- but you're not going to have any residents onsite?

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

No, not at this time. We are looking into housing and transportation also but that's another whole ball game. But it is rolling, but we're mostly concentrating on getting this building up and running. That will also be part of the two.

**MS. SOEHNGEN:**

That's actually going to be the next project, once this one's up and running, is going to be the housing.

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

We're going to try to get that with -- that's another -- that's a tough nut to crack because then you have got the Department of Health and caregivers; you know, they have to be watched twenty-four seven. Certain people, like my son would have to be watched twenty-four seven, Allyson's father, so that's another big obstacle. But, you know, we're going to get there. You know, we don't have any doubts in our mind. It's just betting through this one first and doing it correctly.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

I have to tell you, and I'm sure you understand that we have many, many different organizations that we invite often to come speak to our Committee so that we as Committee members can get the information out to our colleagues and, of course, out to Suffolk County residents. So as far as building a name and letting everybody know that you are there and the kinds of services that you provide, which are so very necessary here locally, certainly let us know. We are more than willing and able to help get the word out and put you in touch with so many veterans organizations and those that serve Suffolk County residents with special needs. We would all be very happy to help introduce the program and help it grow any way we can.

**MS. SOEHNGEN:**

Thank you.

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

Thank you.

**MS. SOEHNGEN:**

If I could just say one more thing. I would like to thank Director Tom Ronayne for meeting with us and helping to get us here today.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Yeah, he's okay. He's all right.

[Laughter]

**MS. SOEHNGEN:**

And also, just to let you know, we are having a kickoff fundraising gala at Leonard's of Great Neck on Veterans Day. We will be having it this year on Veterans Day, and we certainly have invitations for all of you to attend. We are expecting hundreds of people, and we have a great evening lined up with casino night and singers and fun events and auctions, and we're certainly looking to make a few bucks that night, so we're excited about the gala. And it's also something -- we would love to invite you and spread the word of the gala for the ticket sales. We have a website for New Beginnings --

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

Yes, and we'll give you our business cards. It'll have the website there. It's a really beautiful website. We put a lot of work into it.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Legislator Montano.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the presentation. You have answered some of the questions that I have listed here. Are you -- have you heard about or aware of the young boy in Brentwood that -- his name is Wilson Batista. Did you read about that, that he was shot playing basketball and he suffered -- the bullet went into the eye, and he suffered traumatic brain injury? He is presently at Childrens' -- Schneider Childrens' Hospital. Are you aware of that case?

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

No, I'm not.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

I happen to be, in addition to their Legislator, the family's spokesperson. And, as you were speaking, I was thinking of, you know, his situation, because he's lying -- you know, he's in the hospital. And I did have some questions, some of which you answered. In other words, your building is not up yet, but you are ready to break ground?

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

That's correct.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

The other question I was going to ask is how many beds you have, but you are not going to have beds, though. You're just going to do outpatient therapy?

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

That is correct, for now, yes.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Are you affiliated with any particular hospital?

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

No.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Now, how are the -- see, because when you were talking, I thought this would be a good way of, you know, getting someone like Mr. Batista into a facility where he could be cared for because I think at some point the medical insurance that's covering his stay is going to run out.

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

Correct.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

And, you know, who pays for the medical insurance, or who pays the expenses if you had an in-house patient that needed extensive care? But I don't think you're doing that.

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

No, because it isn't inpatient.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Is this for the families as well as the --

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

Yes.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

So it's therapy and counseling for the families --

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

Absolutely, all different kinds of programs. We're going to reach out in every different way that we can. And what he would do is -- how old is this young man?

**LEG. MONTANO:**

He's 13.

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

What we have is FACTS. It's a family advocacy program, and he might be eligible to get onto the waiver program for traumatic brain injury for people that have sustained brain injury under the age of 22.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

And it doesn't matter how that brain injury occurred? In other words, in this case, he was a victim -- he was a victim of a --

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

No, it doesn't. Just as long as he's diagnosed with a brain injury, right, he can get onto this program.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Could you give me the name of program again? I want to write it down.

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

Sure. It's called the OMRDD Waiver Program for TBI.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Okay. You got that, Bob?

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

TBI Waiver Program.

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

Right, for people who have sustained a traumatic brain injury under the age of 22, and what they do is they can help find resources, which are minimal, and that's why we're creating this, but help find resources. And I also have a number at home. I can, if you'd like me to get in touch with you, I have a young lady who works with the school districts for young children, and she helps them get therapy. They are right in Port Jeff. She helps them to -- she advocates for people with traumatic brain injury and other disabilities and helps them to make sure that they get the help that they need.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Right. Well, we're working with the family, and we also have a fund set up, The Wilson Batista Family Fund, to help out the family. But it's very difficult to really raise the kind of money that they need, and my question had to do with the medical insurance. Once this medical insurance policy expires, and I don't know the extent of it, what happens there?

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

What happens there is --

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Do they go on Medicaid; is that --

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

Yes, absolutely.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

And do you counsel families in terms of what they --

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

Absolutely. I don't deal with the OMRDD. I deal with the Department of Health TBI Waiver Program, but I have a young woman that could help and her --

**LEG. MONTANO:**

Well, we're going to be in contact, if you don't mind.

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

Absolutely. I will give you my card.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

All right. My aide is going to call you, and what we'd also like to do is maybe get a copy of your 501(c)(3) because that would help us in the event we're able to do any funding for the organization.

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

Oh, that would be great. Yes. Thank you.

**LEG. MONTANO:**

All right? So Bob's going to be calling you. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

Thank you very much.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Allyson, Kate, Deborah, Tony, it was great to see you today, and thanks so much for being with us.

**MS. DIMEGLIO:**

Thank you very much.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

I wish you every success.

**MS. SCERRI:**

Thank you very much.

**MS. SOEHNGEN:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

We are adjourned.

*[The meeting was adjourned at 9:49 A.M.]*