Testimony of Dr Bryan Weinstein, D.O.

My name is Doctor Bryan Weinstein. I am a board certified psychiatrist specializing in the pharmacological and rehabilitative aspects for individuals suffering traumatic brain injuries. I see approximately 70 traumatic injury patients per week. As the psychiatrist I am privy to the most intimate experiences that exist for these patients.

With your permission please allow me to introduce a simple mental exercise. Imagine upon awakening you discover that you now live in a new country where every one of course speaks a new language and has different cultural norms and values. Additionally you find that all of your friends, your wife and your children now speak the new language and can no longer speak your native language. All you have to do is learn this new language and all of the cultural nuances of that country. Now please also imagine you had a meeting with a group of colleagues over wine and had much too much to drink. You stumbled to your cab and were taken home. When you awoke you found that you did not sober up. And that you never will. You will continue to be disoriented, you will continued to be dizzy and off balance, you will continued to be impulsive in your thinking and at times inappropriately jovial and at times inappropriately aggressive. Clearly you are disinhibited causing you to say and do things with no insight or internal stop mechanisms. And clearly you demonstrate very poor judgment and poor problem solving. Now please fuse the two scenarios I gave you. Please take 10 sec to imagine both scenarios existing for a minimum of 2 years and for a maximum of life. As a result, I assure you that you will most likely loose all of your friends, as well as potentially your wife and you will be alienated from your children. This sounds like a nightmare. This is not a far-fetched science fiction movie but the real possibility of an injury that turns into a life long illness. This is called a traumatic brain injury. I see and treat these injuries as they result from motor vehicle accidents.

Everyday you casually enter a roughly 3,000 pound vehicle made of steel and glass and you drive between 40-80 MPH while casually speak on phones, texting, playing with the radio, or just thinking about something else in your life. You share the road with other drivers who drive at the same speeds doing the same casual dance called driving. What would you bet that you never get into an accident? Do you really think this could never happen to you? I know you have heard the phrase " I never thought this could happen to me." And then it does. As long as you or your loved ones drive a motor vehicle you stand the chance of being a victim.

Now let me assure you that you do not have to have a huge and sensational auto accident to acquire a brain injury. A contra coup injury is a name that explains what can happen to the brain inside the skull as your head accelerates and decelerates from even minor accidents. The injuries to your brain can affect large parts of your brain. Shearing forces cause billions of nerve cells to be damaged. Unlike a bad bruise on your body, a bruise on your brain can have catastrophic implications to your life. Unlike a physical injury, a brain injury is not seen. So all of the symptoms we discussed will gather no sympathy. Instead you will be held fully responsible for your actions. You will be a victim of your brains inability to function. The brain also does not heal in a predictable manner.

All symptoms can go away in periods of 6 months to 1 year or you may have severe behavior and thinking deficits for life. Make no mistake; this also does not have to be correlated to the severity of your injury. So a 40 mph collision with no visual impact to the head but rather the deceleration force we call contra coup can cause symptoms for life. Again this is an injury that turns into a life long illness with profound social and occupational consequences.

Now we currently have a world-class health care system. There seems to be no better place on earth to receive care if you or your loved ones receive a brain injury. Michigan stands out on a few aspects making it a distinguished and desired place to live. We have great lakes, we have many inland lakes. We have a wondrous up north, we have strong and deep mid western roots. We are culturally diverse, and we have a world-class health care system for injuries resulting from auto accidents. What in Michigan can we say that no other place in the world has…Please I implore you, let us not take this for granted and let us not destroy this. This is not a political or financial debate. this is a human debate. Above all we are human beings and we are supposed to care for our fellow man. As a medical student I was once taught by an attending physician to treat my patients as if they were my relatives. A great compass on your compassion for mankind is to treat your fellow women or man the same as you would treat you're closest and cherished loved ones. If your wife or child had a brain injury from a motor vehicle accident you would want to live no where else but in Michigan and you would want no other health care system in the United States but the system we have here in Michigan Like a small cancer disrupting a genetic makeup, even the slightest changes can one day destroy this world-class heath system. Please for the sake of your own children, grandchildren, spouse and fellow Michiganders; please do not allow this health care system to vanish.

Sincerely,

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