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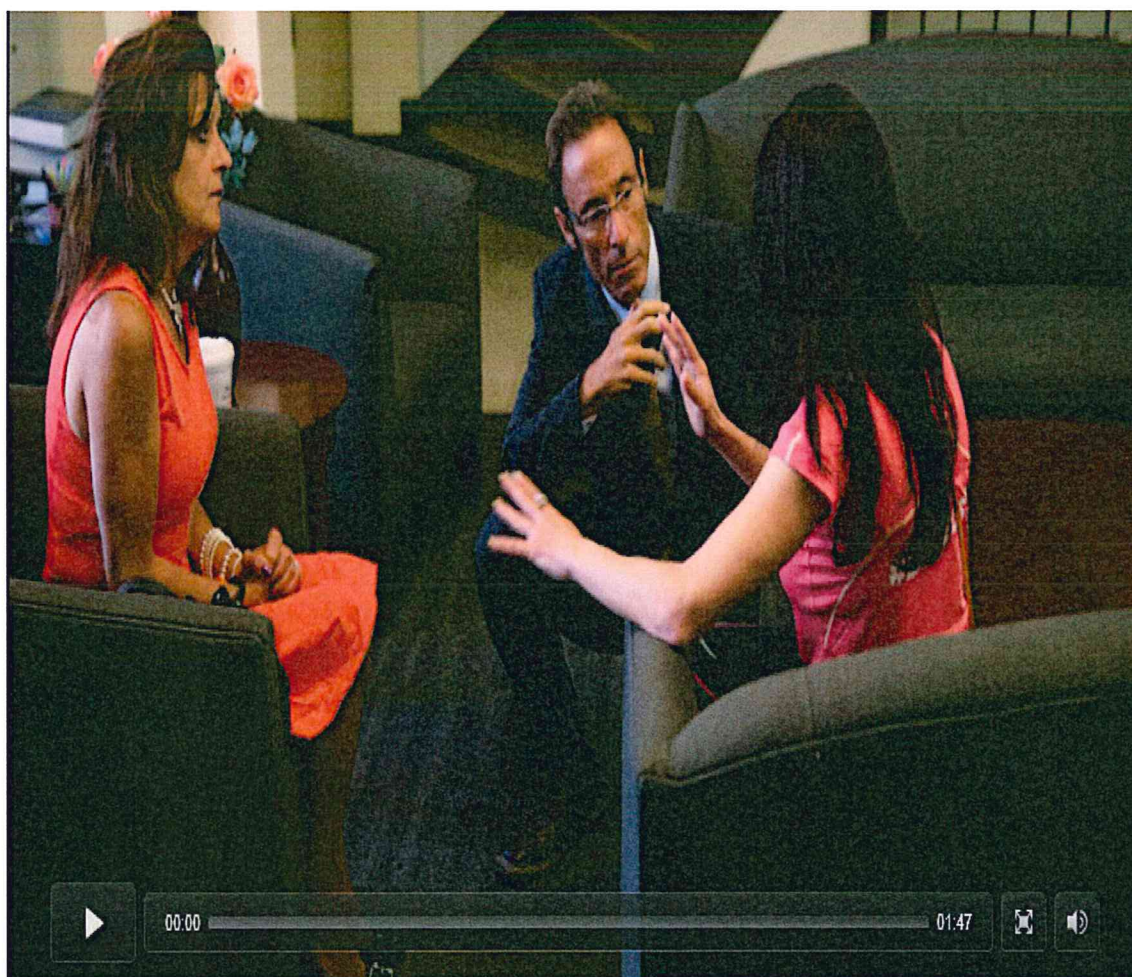
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Marathon bombings survivors seek more aid

Victims with brain injuries question One Fund's payout

By **David Abel** | GLOBE STAFF JUNE 21, 2014



Several survivors of the Boston Marathon bombings who say they have traumatic brain injuries are urging a review of their medical records by officials overseeing One Fund Boston before the distribution of millions of dollars among those injured during last year's attack.

At a press conference Friday afternoon at the Massachusetts Bar Association, attorneys representing some of those survivors questioned the criteria the charitable organization plans to use in determining how much money to give each victim.

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"There were victims who suffered serious, permanent injuries who have quite clearly fallen through the cracks," said Paul White, an attorney speaking for at least 14 survivors who contend that their injuries have been compensated unfairly.

This summer, the One Fund, established to help those injured during the attacks, plans to distribute about \$19 million, which comes after the charity provided nearly \$61 million last year to 232 individuals and families.

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The lawyers argued the charity should review the medical records of those with invisible wounds, just as officials said they would review records for those who lost limbs or suffered major physical wounds. Not doing so, the lawyers said, would mean those who say they have brain injuries will receive substantially less aid than they need to pay medical bills and cover the costs of future treatment.

White said that survivors in the group have so far received only \$8,000 apiece, the least amount provided by One Fund in its initial distribution. In an effort to provide assistance quickly, the One Fund based its previous aid on documented injuries and the time a victim spent at a hospital, rather than evaluating individual medical claims.

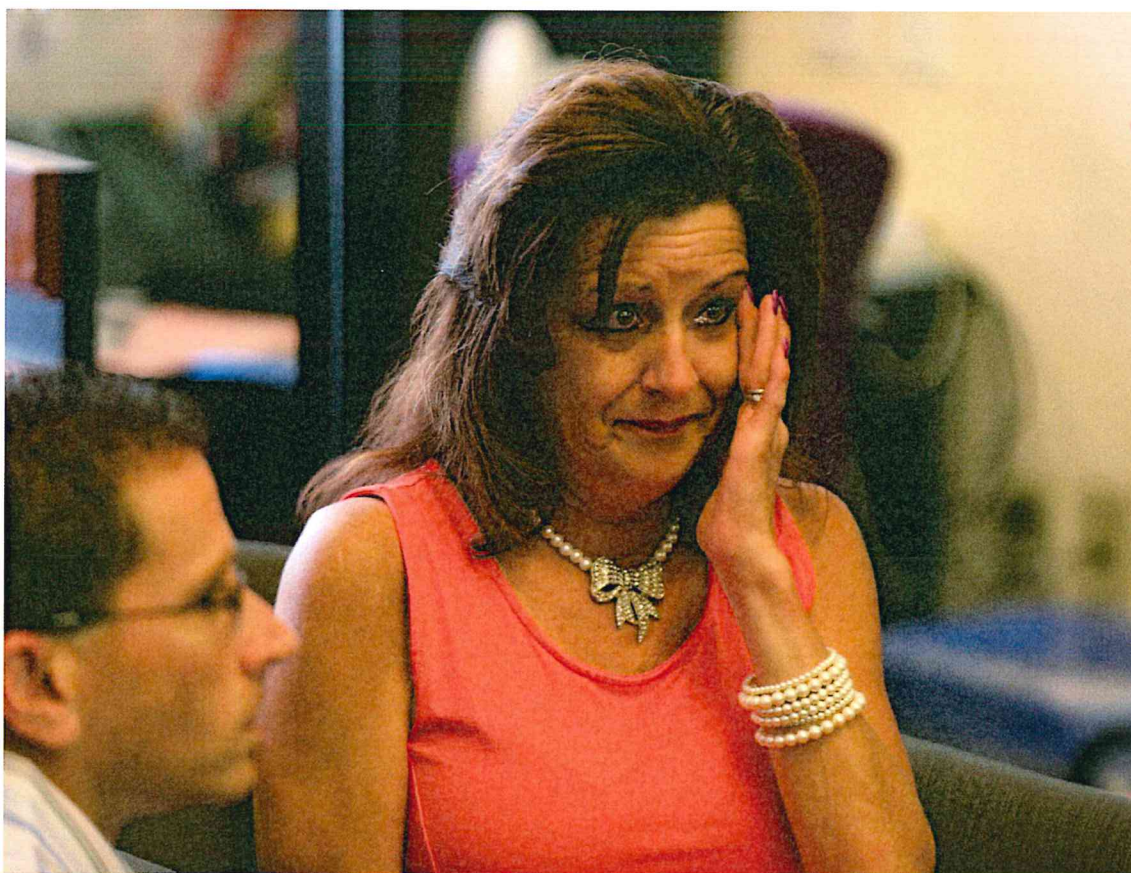
"Now that we have time . . . there's an opportunity to evaluate the people and

consider their injuries in full,” White argued.

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One Fund officials challenged the motivations of the attorneys representing the group and said all victims who applied for additional aid would receive another cash gift from the charity, probably more than they did last year. The officials said their medical advisory board, which included doctors who treated bombing victims, was unaware of any evidence to support the claims of those who say they suffered a permanent traumatic brain injury.

In addition to the cash, they also said they will be paying for services to care for those with hearing loss, ringing in the ears, post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injuries, and mental illnesses that might have resulted from the attack.



JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

Marathon bombings victim Ellen Sexton-Rogers became emotional Friday while describing her memory problems from the attacks.

“We have taken invisible injuries very seriously,” said Dot Joyce, a spokeswoman for the One Fund. “Not only are we offering cash gifts to those individuals, we are also investing in longer-term programs and services that will significantly help with those specific injuries. There will never be enough money to compensate everyone for all that was lost.”

She added: “It’s unfortunate that during this time of tremendous generosity that attorneys would involve themselves for what appears to be personal gain and publicity. It’s unfortunate that we see individuals trying to potentially take advantage of that unprecedented generosity.”

Douglas Sheff, president of the Massachusetts Bar Association, said the attorneys who have helped the group have provided their services for free. He said his only motive is to ensure that those victims with invisible injuries have their cases “fairly considered.”

Among those victims urging the One Fund to take a closer look at her case is Ellen Sexton Rogers, 52, a mother of four from Tewksbury.

She said she was about 10 steps from the first blast near the finish line and has been unable to work since. She said she has more than \$80,000 in medical bills, survives on disability payments, and is hoping for greater cash assistance from the One Fund.

She said a doctor at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital in Boston diagnosed her with a traumatic brain injury, but that doctor did not return a reporter’s calls seeking comment.

She said she has suffered a host of memory and emotional problems as a result of the attack.

“Something just isn’t right,” she said. “I can’t function like I did before.”

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