

6668

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Human Services Committee
Public Hearing March 17, 2009
Testimony in opposition to section two of HB6668 - AN ACT PROVIDING
QUALITY CARE, FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT AND NURSING HOME
FUNDING REFORM.

Senator Doyle, Representative Walker, and members of the Human Services
Committee;

My name is Deborah Legault and I am a personal care attendant (sometimes referred to as a Personal Care Assistant/PCA) and the founder of the Connecticut Association of Personal Assistants. I am testifying in opposition to section two of HB6668 - AN ACT PROVIDING QUALITY CARE, FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT AND NURSING HOME FUNDING REFORM. PCA's support people with disabilities to live independently in the community. I am also a spouse and caregiver for my husband who has a severe disability and uses a wheelchair. We hire our own personal assistants for his support. Personal care assistants are hired and managed by the person with a disability; we do not work for any agencies. The relationship between the person with a disability and the PCA is very unique because of the nature of our work. I was a computer programmer for over 20 years making \$60,000 a year and I turned my back on that job for a lower paying job as a PCA. I do not regret that decision at all because I have a better, more fulfilling job where I am appreciated and very very happy. I know I am an important part of my employers life.

I am opposed to section 2 of the bill that sets up the Personal Care Attendant Quality Home Care Workforce Council. There is no representation of personal care attendants on the council that is looking to improve the quality and availability of PCA services. Because of the unique relationship of PCA's and their employers I would not want to be put on a back-up list and asked to go work for someone I do not know. A raise in pay for personal assistants without knowledge of the waiver system would hurt people with disabilities and personal assistants. The people with disabilities would have fewer hours for support thus reducing the hours for their personal assistants. Also I would not want a workforce council interfering

with my relationship with my employer, which is the number one reason I love this job.

A representative from SEIU 1199 union spoke with me twice about this council being the mechanism for unionizing personal assistants in the state. As stated in the original language proposed for the bill: “The PCA Quality Home Care Workforce Council shall be considered the employer of personal care attendants, as defined by and solely for the purposes of said chapter 68. The Council shall have the authority and obligation to bargain and enter into agreements with a representative of personal care attendants that has been designated by the State Board of Labor Relations as the exclusive bargaining agent of such attendants, and through such agreements shall have the authority to establish minimum standards governing such attendants’ compensation, including wages and benefits, the form and manner of compensation payments, and other terms and conditions of employment affecting the attendant workforce....” This language is not in Raised Bill 6668 now but could be easily inserted later. I have spoken with personal assistants from Maine who are unionized, and there has been no real benefits from the union and they were shocked when they found out they needed to pay union dues. Please do not destroy the PCA services in Connecticut by allowing the union to come between PCA’s and their employers.

Please remove section 2 of Raised Bill 6668 and keep my wonderful job the way it is and people with disabilities living in the community.

Respectfully,

Deborah Legault