

Dejourn Shields, Personal Care Assistant
Bill 6486
Human Services Committee, March 8, 2011

My name is Dejourn Shields and I've been a PCA for only about three months. I graduated from college last year with a bachelor's degree in health science and couldn't find a job that would fit my experiences. Then, my next door neighbor, a home care consumer, told me he could hire me as a PCA. In December he had to let a PCA go and he hired me.

The PCA work really caught me off guard. There's no type of medical insurance, there's no retirement, there are no benefits at all. Why don't we have those things when this is a job? I'm a young adult out of college and I've learned that I can expect health care and retirement. If I get sick in this job, that's a problem. I have no insurance. I have to take off work, I don't get paid for it, nothing.

I also only have about 18 hours/week of work. I've been trying to find more clients, but I've had no luck. I live with my mother so thankfully I don't have to pay my own rent, but I still have utilities and student loans to worry about.

PCA work is a stepping stone to going back to school next fall. I do this now because I know what I need to do to take care of my responsibilities. I'd like to get a RN or physician assistant degree. I'm going back to school starting this Thursday to get my CNA license in order to make my resume more attractive. Being a CNA will help me get a job so that I look more attractive to schools.

I like my PCA work, but it's barely even making ends meet. I'm a college graduate looking for something good for my future and while I like this work, it doesn't give me the benefits or pay that I'm looking for. Plus there's no room for advancement.

This is a big problem since the baby boom is getting older. More people will need PCAs and CNAs because they need help. We need to do something to make this field more attractive so that people get the care they need.

If the state wants to keep workers like me in the home care field, the first step would be passing this workforce council. PCAs need access to benefits, training, and a sense of career. Without making these improvements, the PCAs who can will just move on to something else. It doesn't matter how much you care about your clients—you have to take care of your own future and your own responsibilities too.