

Senator Musto, Representative Tercyak, and Members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Juliet Meyer, and I live in Hartford.

I strongly oppose Raised Bill # 6486 ("An Act Concerning Home Health Care Services ...").

All my life, I have been a supporter of the right of workers to organize for fair wages, benefits, and working conditions. Suddenly, on the issue of personal care assistance, I find myself on the other side of the aisle.

Personal care assistants (PCA's) help people with disabilities to perform all the daily tasks that the rest of us unthinkingly perform for ourselves: getting into and out of bed, toileting, washing, dressing and undressing, preparing food, eating, and other activities. Without their PCA's assistance, the hiring disabled person may not get help with these tasks, leading to illness, harm, or in extreme cases, death.

If unionized PCA's go on strike, who will care for people who cannot move, eat, or go to the bathroom by themselves?

If a PCA files a grievance, the disabled person will have to hire another PCA. If the first PCA then wins back wages, how will the disabled person be able to pay back wages after paying the substitute, when most people with disabilities are already living on the edge? Surely DSS does not have the funds necessary to make additional outlays to its disabled clients to assist them in such a case. Will the Legislature approve a cushion fund for DSS to cover such cases? I do not think it likely.

What of the case of a PCA who is discharged for threatening or abusing a client, where the charge is valid but unprovable. If the PCA files a grievance, will the frightened disabled person be forced to take the now-legally-strengthened PCA back?

In sum, personal care assistance involves a complex, very, very personal and intimate relationship between a disabled employer and his or her PCA. It is not suited to the structure and strictures of unionization. Thank you.