

This is testimony regarding raised House Bill 6486. My name is Lisa Caron and I am opposed to this Bill. I have been an advocate for people with disabilities for much of my life. My work has been of this nature for the last 15 years and in addition, I have many friends with disabilities.

I worked for 10 years with young people with physical disabilities who wanted to live independently. They lived with family members, often in inaccessible homes, or more often, they lived in nursing homes with people 50 years older than themselves.

It is an amazingly complex process to plan independent living for someone who has not lived independently with a disability before. All of their care has been provided by a family member, a home health aide in their home, or by the aides in the nursing home. When planning personal assistance, there is concern about the following:

Who will provide my care?

How will I know that I can trust them to treat me well?

How will I know that they will be dependable?

What will it be like to have a few people help me each day?

How will I be able to pay for this care?

A team of professionals from disability related agencies, which often includes a person who uses personal assistance services, helps the person answer these questions and through a careful and meticulous process, works with them as they move to a new home. They learn to hire and train personal assistants and learns when someone isn't going to work out. Although it isn't necessarily predictable, they eventually develop a regular schedule of personal assistants with whom they have a trusting relationship. There is respect on both sides.

If this Bill is passed, this secure system will no longer exist. The personal assistants would ruin the delicate balance that exists by placing more rules and regulations for personal assistants, adding more red tape, and adding a threat that they will go off and find another job, leaving the person with a disability stranded. These are just a few of the problems that would be caused.

Please consider the person, not the money and the power. You are the Human Services Committee and I and many others are counting on you to support the human aspect of this situation. Thank you for your attention to this testimony.

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