

Patricia Edwards, Home Care Consumer
Bill 6486
Human Services Committee, March 8, 2011

My name is Patricia Edwards and I've been using the home care system for 6 years. Before that, my sister and niece took care of me but didn't get paid. Then I found out about the PCA home care program through the state and I enrolled. Once in the program we were able to pay people, my sister retired from caring for me. At one point my nephew helped care for me, but he got a regular job and couldn't stick around for me. Now my niece and two other workers care for me.

Pat is my main caregiver. She works for me 15 hours a week. I'm not allowed to hire her for more hours than that. Pat has been with me for 3 years. She came off the Allied registry, which is a list they keep of PCAs looking for clients. I picked her off the roster and prayed that she would be good. She's been with me ever since. She helps me with bathing, getting dressed, combing my hair, doing dishes, changing my linens, and other basic house things. My niece does the rest of the hours, doing the same work.

Sandra is my backup caregiver. This is really important in case someone is sick or can't make it. Right now she's caring for me because one of my caregivers got injured.

It's sad to think of that. A caregiver slips on the ice and gets hurt and now can't help me, but also doesn't have health insurance and can't get paid for the hours either, since there's no sick time. She still has bills to pay, that's not fair. That's no way to treat someone that gives me such important care.

I would love for PCAs to get more money. For more money they'd do an even better job. And they need benefits. I worked in the school system, I know. They need sick time. I have a passion for my workers. They need to earn more money at work-- they work so hard. I can only speak to the PCAs I have but they work really hard. I depend on them every day. I know it would be a full-time job for them if they had the right hours. We just need to make it possible for our PCAs to be respected and valued in their paychecks the same way I respect and value the hard work they do for me.