

***Sasha Commodore, Personal Care Assistant***  
***Bill 6486***  
***Human Services Committee, March 8, 2011***

My name is Sasha Commodore and I'm a PCA. I've been doing this work since 2006 when I needed a job and a friend referred me to my client. In April 2009 I began full-time with my client.

I've become real friends with my client. I cook for him, run errands for him, bathe him, take him to doctor's appointments, and help him with his exercises. He couldn't do any of these things on his own. I help out on week days, but I only get paid for 25 hours. He needs more care than I can provide in that time, so I do several hours of work each week for free. He doesn't have enough hours of care to pay someone on weekends, so his mom helps out then.

I would love to stay with him for many years, but I'm not sure I can stick around this line of work because there's no opportunity for advancement—no room to move up, no chance of a pay increase, no additional benefits or promotions. I'm going to school now – my client actually encouraged it—to get more skills so that I can move up, but I'm going to have to leave him to do that.

We also need health benefits. If I am sick, my client has a list of backups to call, but it doesn't always work out. Sometimes when I call in sick I have to come anyway, otherwise he won't get the help he needs. I have no health insurance and if something goes wrong I have to pay out-of-pocket to receive medical care.

Just as important, our clients need more hours of care. My heart goes out to people who can't afford services. It's good that my client has his mother to help out but not everybody has that.

PCAs need a way to come together to speak for ourselves and we don't have one now. I hope that when PCAs can come together we can advocate with our clients for more services, and more care hours if they need them. I hope that our lawmakers pass this bill so that both PCAs and clients can have a voice in home care to make the improvements we need.