

Stop the SEIU from Hijacking Personal Assistance Services in Connecticut

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Testimony to Human Services Committee on Raised HB 6486, “An Act Concerning Home Health Care Services and the Establishment of a Personal Care Attendant Workforce Council”

My name is Stephen Mendelsohn, I am an adult on the autism spectrum, and I am here today to voice strong opposition to Raised HB 6486, which seeks to create a new state agency so that the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) can unionize in relation to it. While I do not use PCA services at the present time, I could envision this becoming a reality for me, as well as for other autistic adults.

Other members of our coalition who are PCAs or their employers will tell you personal stories about why the proposed council and unionization will harm them. I am here to tell you why putting PCA services under the control of the SEIU is a terrible idea. Make no mistake; the SEIU drafted this bill and is seeking to force all PCAs in Connecticut to pay dues or “fair-share fees” to their union.

According to RewardingWork.org, in SEIU-run Massachusetts, minimum union dues are \$6.50 per biweekly pay period. For a backup PCA working an occasional 3-hour shift at roughly \$12/hour, union dues could amount to 18% of a PCA’s paycheck. There are many good reasons someone with a disability would want to hire lots of part-time PCAs, and the SEIU scheme would punish them.

PCAs, like the rest of us, deserve a right to privacy. But section 1(f)(3) of HB 6486 would mandate that the contact information of all PCAs be turned over to

the union. We know that in other communities, such as Fresno, CA, the SEIU has used this information to go to home care workers' homes, open their mail, and bully and intimidate people into voting for the SEIU over a rival union or no union. Do we really want to subject PCAs to SEIU intimidation?

The SEIU's support for unfair labor practices, intimidation, and violence hardly stops here. In March 2009, the SEIU's own staff union, the Union of Union Representatives, picketed SEIU headquarters, charging SEIU with unfair labor practices as well as race and age discrimination. Melissa Pinnick, chief out-of-state SEIU organizer on this issue in Connecticut, was there with a bullhorn shouting, "How do you spell hypocrisy? S-E-I-U!" If the SEIU's organizers cannot trust their own union, why should people with disabilities and PCAs do so? The SEIU has also recently posted to its blog a punk rock song, "Take 'Em Down" by Dropkick Murphys as the union's new theme song with the lyrics, "When the boss comes callin' we gotta organize / Let 'em know / We gotta take the bastards down / Let them know / We gotta smash them to the ground ..."

Who is the SEIU trying to smash to the ground here? Do we really want these purple shirts in the homes of our friends with severe disabilities?

So I implore you, as much as we all want better wages and benefits for PCAs, do not drink the SEIU's toxic purple Kool-Aid. At a time when services are being cut and we are about to lose our \$500 property tax exemption as part of a massive tax hike, it makes no sense diverting limited resources to a new state agency and put union dues from low-wage PCAs into the pockets of the 322 out of 1031 SEIU employees who earn over \$75,000 a year. This is a form of "class

struggle,” but not the way the union would have it. Disability activists stopped forced unionization of PCAs in Pennsylvania and Montana; we can stop it in Connecticut as well.

Don't Mourn, Organize Against the SEIU. We Shall Overcome.

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Sources:

<http://www.rewardingwork.org/en/State-Resources/Massachusetts/Frequently-asked-questions.aspx> “Dues equal 2% of PCA wages before taxes are taken out every pay period. There is also a minimum and maximum dues payment. **All PCAs will pay at least \$6.50/pay period** and PCAs only pay the 2% on their first 40 hours they work each week.” (emphasis added)

Workers blow whistle on SEIU election fraud
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vg06CC1vkX8>

SEIU Staff Union Pickets the SEIU!
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwsVnbLruwI>

“SEIU Employees Picket Own Union Over Layoffs”, San Francisco Chronicle, March 28, 2009 by Sam Hananel, Associated Press <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/03/28/MNIC16O7P4.DTL> “the UUR has filed unfair labor practice charges and age and race discrimination claims against the SEIU.”

SEIU Blog: <http://www.seiu.org/2011/02/the-dropkick-murphys.php>

<http://countrythinker.com/home/politics/song-released-for-wisconsin-workers-we-gotta-take-the-bastards-down/> “Taken literally, the release of this song for use in a protest of legislation is essentially a call to overthrow the Wisconsin state government.... it is vastly more likely that someone would be inspired to violence by this song than [Sarah Palin's] political strategy map.”

<http://www.unionfacts.com/unions/unionProfile.cfm?id=137>