

Sherika Knighton, Personal Care Assistant
Bill 6486
Human Services Committee, March 8, 2011

My name is Sherika Knighton and I've been a PCA for 3 years. I have one client who I care for 25 hours/week. She's like a best friend to me. We celebrate our birthdays together and I would never leave her in the lurch. If I'm sick, I can't just call in. I put on a mask and go in to care for her. I'm passionate about making sure she gets what she needs.

I'm a CNA and I work in a nursing home full-time in the evenings, too. As a PCA I only have to care for one person, versus 10 people at the nursing home, so I enjoy it more and my client gets more personal attention. I like the PCA work more, but the nursing home work pays the bills. The nursing home gives us health insurance, money back towards school, and holiday pay.

If we had at least health benefits I would quit my job and be a full time PCA.

I've been with more clients. At one point I had three full time but we still can't pay the bills. It's easiest to have one client and the nursing home work instead of three different clients. It's less travel and that way I have benefits.

Home care clients would get better care and more people would be able to stay at home if pay and benefits for PCAs were better. If there were benefits to bring people to the PCA job more people would do it. Definitely if PCAs got benefits like the nursing home, more nursing aides would be PCAs. The most talented CNAs end up just doing nursing home work because of the pay and benefits.

I'm going to school to become an LPN right now, to advance my nursing home career and earn a little more money. PCAs need a career ladder like this, too. We need to know that things are getting better. Once I become a nurse, I will still provide care to my client, even though PCAs receive half as much as nurses do. I will still be her PCA because I am her best friend and she will never be able to find anyone who cares for her as well as I do.

I'm in support of creating a workforce council because if we want PCAs like me to be able to stick around, we need to look at what other CNA jobs are offering and figure out how to get closer to that. Sitting down with clients and officials I'm sure we can find a way to make the jobs better.