

March 2, 2012

Dear Connecticut Legislators,

I am a person with a disability (a consumer) who has been fortunate enough to remain independent through the the PCA program created by independent living advocates and the Massachusetts Medicaid office.

For the last 20 years, I have employed many many PCAs. It has always been very clear to me that strengthening this PCA workforce will add stability and respect to the profession and therefore to the lives of their consumer employers.

Acknowledgment of personal care attendants as a workforce that has the right to bargain has given an increased respect and recognition to this career.

Here in Massachusetts, as a member of the PCA quality Homecare Workforce Council, I participated in the first collective bargaining session with the PCA-SEIU union.

The Director of the Workforce Council, and our appointed labor negotiator, as well as three consumer members of the Council, met on a regular basis with three union representatives, and many personal care attendants (PCAs). The Council remained in communication with state officials throughout this process. When consumers and SEIU had disagreements during these negotiations, we had a place where we could go at these differences in an organized and democratic way.

The first contract negotiations resulted in a contract that increased the wages of PCAs. The contract held firmly to consumer control and a no strike clause. Our joint Labor Management Committee grew out of collective bargaining and it has helped both parties to assess and prioritize improvements to the program. These changes have been beneficial to both PCAs and consumers.

Since then we have been enduring the same financial crisis that many states are in. But the doors that have been opened by collective bargaining have led to many collaborative efforts to improve and support the PCA program.

Sincerely Yours,

Elizabeth Casey

Massachusetts PCA Quality Homecare Workforce Council 2007-2012