

Kilra Hylton, PCA from Boston, Massachusetts

In favor of HB 5433

My name is Kilra Hylton and for the last four years I have been a home care PCA in Massachusetts. I'm here today to tell you why our union makes home care better for my consumers and for me.

Massachusetts PCAs just formed our union a few years ago and so far we have bargained only one contract. When we first formed our union I wasn't involved. I didn't understand what a union is or how it worked so I sort of just stayed out of it. In our first contract we won a \$.40 raise, and to be honest I didn't even get involved then.

Our union gives us access to a range of training. I went to school to be a Medical Assistant, so I didn't really think I needed training. But, as a PCA I need a range of skills so that I can be ready to take care of a range of clients. More importantly, I had no idea what it really means to be a truly active PCA.

When I went to the union hall for the training, I changed how I felt about the union. I saw a room full of other PCAs for the first time ever. We learned about our jobs but also about the programs and politics that make home care possible. We learned about where the funding comes from and how it needs to be protected.

I think the raise we got will result in better care. Anyone could be a PCA – it could be a worker or a family member. What is most important is that they really care and that they can stick around because the relationship is so important. When we get a raise we can stick around longer. That makes care better.

Lawmakers aren't PCAs. You don't work the job we work. Only we know what we need and we need a voice for improvements so that we get more of what we need to stay on the job.

In the last few weeks I've gone around Connecticut telling my story and my experiences in the union to several people in the Bridgeport area. Some of them earn \$8.25 and work long hours to make ends meet. They're loving people and they're doing it out of their heart but they're not getting rewarded. Connecticut needs to be fair to those who care.

PCAs have to be active in doing our job. Not just doing our job but advocating for ourselves, our consumers, what we need. People who care shouldn't be in a situation where they can't care for themselves or their families. If you give PCAs the right to bargain, they will have the opportunity to make things better. Please pass this bill.