

Margie Santana, Home Care Consumer
Hartford, Conn.
For Bill #5433

My name is Margie Santana and I've been receiving home care since 2007. Before that, I worked for the school system. In 2006 I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. I didn't think I could come to this where I have to be in the wheelchair 24-7. Now I rely on caregivers for every-day activities like bathing, dressing, and cleaning my house.

I am very fortunate that right away I could hire Luis. In fact, as soon as he heard I was sick, Luis quit his job to help me out. He lives with me and gives me care around-the-clock, even though he gets paid for just 25.75 hours.

The biggest challenge for me has been that I need help to be catheterized. This is a very personal process and not every caregiver is willing to do it. Outside of Luis whom I know very, very well, I have to hire female caregivers. I hired one who when she got here said she wouldn't do my catheter because the church wouldn't let her look at female privates. So I had to fire her.

I also had one other woman who would come here to take care of me, but she turned out to be unreliable so I had to fire her too.

The two workers I have now, I would not let them go for the world. They're wonderful. They care for me, and I care very much about them.

I'm dying to give these workers a raise, though. They started years ago at \$12 something an hour. Now because pay stayed the same but taxes went up, they're down to \$11 something. It's not fair. What kind of job gives you a pay cut for working hard, year after year? We can only pay what the state gives us. Lawmakers need to make it possible for us to pay more.

I really hope lawmakers will pass this bill so that we can have our voices heard. PCAs need recognition, respect, and fair pay for the hard work they do. For me it's so hard because I sit in my chair 24-7 and they do the hard work, I can't help. I want to do something to help them.