

March 12, 2012

Dear Committee Members,

I am here to tell you that I want you to kill the bill (5433) to unionize Personal assistants. I am a woman with severe cerebral palsy and I DO NOT want my Personal to be unionized. This will affect my life and others people with disabilities lives.

Governor Malloy ignored people with disabilities and personal assistants when he used an executive order to get home care worker unionized. Three legislature sessions there was a bill to unionize PCAs, but it never went to the house or the senate for a full vote. The disability movement is trying to overturn this law because for people with significant disabilities the Governor's action will have unsafe consequences.

In Connecticut we have a personal assistance program funded by Medicaid. This program has a cap. An individual's care can't go over the cap, if a person goes over the cap he/she will have to be institutionalized. When the union makes us pay our assistants more and give benefits and the amount of hours for our care will be cut. Leaving people with severe disabilities have to decide to struggle in the community or to be institutionalized, this is an awful situation to put someone in.

Thanks to my personal assistants I am able to lead an independent life, I have little use of my legs, hands and voice. But my mind works fine. I have lived on my own for twenty years. I enjoy my life. However, I know if the union steps in I could be institutionalized. I definitely do not want this to happen.

All personal assistants will have to be trained by the union. The union will train our PCAs their way. Most people like to train our assistant ourselves because we train according to our needs. For example, I have to be positioned certain ways in bed, wheelchair, and my shower chair. I will have to retrain them to my need.

If the union steps in it would ruin employers and employees relationships, the union will put people with disabilities and our assistants on the opposing sides. The SEIU will make providers pay union dues. My assistant doesn't want to pay union dues because on their low salary they need every penny they earn.

To me nursing homes are worse than prisons. If you vote "Yes" on this bill you would be sentencing people with severe disabilities to life in institutions. I urge you not to vote for the union and let us keep our freedom.

Sincerely,



Joy M. Minervini