

To: Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee

From: James and Norma LoMonaco

Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and members of the committee: My name is James LoMonaco and I come before the committee today to testify regarding my concerns about Senate Bill 352. This bill is incomplete with regard to the analysis necessary to both advance the interests of care workers and those individuals for whom they provide care.

What I mean by this is that two critical elements are missing: First there has been no thought given to how to assure the disabled retain services at the current level if services per hour become more costly. Through collective bargaining I expect that benefits would improve as would wages. Without action by the General Assembly to assure that additional funding is made available to cover the increased cost the disabled will suffer a loss of services equivalent to the additional cost. As the parent of a 31 year old man with Down's syndrome who lives at home I can assure that I know how difficult it is to obtain support in an amount necessary to allow both of us as parents to work and keep Matthew safe. Adequate funding for the disabled is not now available and may well not be available if the funding issue created by this bill is not addressed.

Second, if collective bargaining is established for care workers questions of how the disabled and their guardians will be able to retain self determination exist. If providers have a contract with the State, who establishes how families will retain some control over the care giver, be able to retain and properly compensate and to terminate those who do not provide adequate care? Will the relationship be between the State and the union only? How will parents and guardians of vulnerable people be able to insure that their concerns for performance are addressed?

Finally, this bill was undertaken without the participation of individuals and families who are directly concerned the quality and indeed the general lack of adequate care for themselves and members of their family. While I have no quarrel with fair wages and benefits and hope they can be achieved SB 352 needs additional work before it's passage.

Thank you.