

Ms Chairwoman Gerrantana and Ms. Chairwoman Ritter and Members of the Committee ,

My name is Karen Lank, a resident of Coventry since 1991 and a native nutmegger. I am here to speak in support of bill S.B. 425: "An act concerning a basic health program" as well as share my personal story. I am a single mother with two dependent children. Since 1987, I have been working at an agency that works with developmentally disabled people as a Day Habilitation Assistant. My duties include toileting individuals, using feeding tubes and other duties the general public would find challenging. In addition I am responsible for passing medication and monitoring the medical condition of the people in my charge. This work while rewarding is often both physically and mentally difficult. While the mental stresses can be hard to quantify, the physical stresses often lead to lower back and tendinitis pain.

In 2010, I was diagnosed with interstitial lung disease. Even though I have full healthcare coverage through my employer, copays have increased to the point that I found the care that I needed was unaffordable. In 2012, I received news that my disease had progressed to the point that further testing and treatment was immediately necessary at this point I found that I had been living with Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis. As a worker in the private sector, I am ineligible for long term disability insurance that state workers enjoy which would have saved me from financial ruin that surely awaits me once I can no longer work.

We in the private sector provide the same services as our state counterparts at a greatly reduced cost saving the state millions of dollars yearly however some of that savings comes at the expense of our health and wellbeing. Year after year my coworkers and I have endured rising healthcare costs without a corresponding rise in salary. This year alone we offered a 20% increase in healthcare costs without a corresponding increase in pay. With inflation, this actually represents nearly a 9% decrease in pay not counting increased health costs.

Three years ago, we were first promised entrance to the state insurance program by 2011. Now in 2012, we have been promised that we will be entered into the state program yet further into the future. We need a basic healthcare program that would guarantee quality healthcare for everyone in a program that would provide preventative as well as continuing care. Such a program would not only provide quality care for those who provide exceptional care for so many but save the state badly needed funds. Partially due to the rising healthcare costs my agency as well as others has been chopping up full time positions into part time positions. Because these part time positions do not provide health insurance these people are forced to use the only healthcare available to them. Many times it is the emergency room at a far higher cost to public than if they had access to preventive healthcare.

For the wellbeing of the people who devote their lives to helping others and for the economic viability of the state we need SB 425 the bill concerning A Basic Health Care Program must be passed and passed quickly.

Thank You.

Karen Lank  
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