

February 26, 2013
General Law Committee

RE: Raised Bill #6432: AN ACT CONCERNING HOMEMAKER SERVICES AND HOMEMAKER-COMPANION AGENCIES

My name is Andrew Clifford, owner of Home Instead Senior Care, an employee-based provider of non-medical home care services in New Haven County since 2002. I am also Treasurer of the Connecticut Chapter of the Home Care Association of America.

I am here to express my support for Raised Bill #6432—AN ACT CONCERNING HOMEMAKER SERVICES AND HOMEMAKER COMPANION AGENCIES.

As a relatively new industry, non-medical home care has seen a surge in providers of late, each offering a similar scope of service such as companionship, light housekeeping, incidental transportation, meal preparation and errands. These services are all designed to keep seniors safe and independent at home.

A quick search of the Yellow Pages or Google for "home care in Connecticut" yields many different choices for the consumer. However, there is no distinction as to how providers operate. At first glance, all providers seem to be created equal, and many consumers base their decision on the most logical factor: price.

But in reality, they are often comparing apples and oranges based on a provider's business model. Registries often charge less than employee-based agencies. They may provide a similar "scope of service," but the method in which they provide it—namely utilizing independent contractors—is fundamentally different. This puts the consumer in an awkward and vulnerable position. Consumers often don't know the difference and are unaware of the implications.

I am pleased that the Connecticut Department of Labor is introducing a bill designed to address the misclassification of employees on behalf of registry-model home care companies.

Caregivers are employees, not independent contractors. These workers deserve the protections of tax withholdings, Workers Compensation insurance, and Social Security contributions made on behalf of the worker. Misclassification cheats workers and puts consumers at risk of liability for caregiver injuries and payment of employment-based taxes.

I often field calls from anxious family members faced with a crisis. Mom has fallen and broken her hip. Following a hospital and rehabilitation stay, she is being released and wants to go home. But she is unsafe to be alone. The caller, meanwhile, is trying to balance home and work life and needs to arrange help for her mom. She is desperate and faced with an important decision. She needs information.

"Who will supervise the worker?" "Who handles the payroll taxes?" "What if the worker gets hurt assisting my mom?" These are all key questions for consumers to ask when researching home care services, but very few know to ask them.

I have made it a priority to help to educate consumers in need so that they may make informed decisions. Now I ask the state's assistance via Raised Bill #6432. This bill should be voted favorably and we will be happy to continue to work with DOL and this committee to make this bill move forward. Thank you.

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