

TESTIMONY OF MAGGIE DRAG, OWNER OF EURO-AMERICAN CONNECTIONS, LLC  
IN OPPOSITION TO HB-6432  
AAC HOMEMAKER SERVICES AND HOMEMAKER COMPANION AGENCIES

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Tercyak and the rest of the Committee. Thank you for the time to testify on this important issue. My name is Maggie Drag, and I am the owner of Euro-American Connections, LLC, a home care registry located in Berlin, CT. I started Euro-American Connections in 1990. We are a home care registry that matches self-employed caregivers with elderly and disabled individuals looking for care at home or in senior and other facilities. In the past 23 years, we have placed over 5,000 caregivers with consumers.

Home care registries serve a critically important function in the care of seniors and people with disabilities. They provide seniors and people with disabilities with independent caregivers, allowing them to remain in their homes, and at a lower cost than employee-based agencies. It also allows caregivers, who do not want to, work for a facility or an employee-based home care agency, to find work with individuals needing care. It is this group of caregivers that I want to focus on today.

Twenty-six years ago, I came from Poland, then a Communist country, because I wanted to make a better life for myself in a free society. I did not want to live my life in a place where I could not control my own future, or have an opportunity to start my own business. I wanted to make my own choices, and take my own risks, in order to build myself a better life, and this country allowed me the freedom to make these choices. When I started Euro-American Connections, soon after arriving in the US, it was not primarily to provide services to seniors, it was more a vehicle to help other new immigrants make some money while they were learning a new language, completing their education, raising families and acquiring the skills required to have a good life in America.

Like me, many of these people wanted to work for themselves or start their own business, not be an employee of someone else. They wanted to decide the hours that they would work, what they would charge and for whom they would work. For me and for many others, that was a large part of what coming to America was all about. These caregivers came from a culture of caregiving, and worked hard to care for their clients. Today, my registry places caregivers from many parts of the world, including American-born caregivers, but we still attract caregivers that have a lot to give, but are not willing or able to take jobs with facilities or employee-based home care agencies.

House Bill 6432, that you are considering today, would kill the registry model of providing independent caregivers for our elderly and people with disabilities. Unfortunately, through this Bill, you are also being pulled into what is essentially a turf battle between employee-based homecare agencies and referral registries. Some employee-based agencies want to kill registries, because they are a lower-priced competitor.

I am not coming to you as a registry owner that wants to protect what appears to be a competitive advantage over employee-based agencies that face higher operating costs. In addition to my home care registry, I also own an employee-based homecare agency which

provides a different level of care for individuals that can afford it. In our employee-based agency, the caregivers are our employees, and we pay for workers compensation, unemployment insurance and liability insurance, and we train and supervise our caregivers in the field. The cost to the consumer is higher, and while the employees in our employee-based agency receive these additional benefits, they earn less than the caregivers that we place through our registry.

It's not that one business model is better than the other. The point is that both consumers, and caregivers who want their independence, should have a choice. Consumers, who cannot afford a higher-priced employee-based agency, dearly need the less expensive registry model. Caregivers, who want to build their own business, and have control over their schedule and the clients they accept, should have the right to chose to forego the protections of workers comp and unemployment insurance, in exchange for their independence and the opportunity to earn and keep more for the services they perform.

In conclusion, I implore you to not pass House Bill 6432, and to keep the registry business model as a vital and economical solution for our state's seniors and people with disabilities. Thank you for allowing this time for me to testify.