

Written Testimony submitted by Pat Tyler to the Appropriations Committee

I am writing on behalf of my daughter and other individuals who utilize DDS waiver services that were specifically created with the purpose of allowing individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families to have the dignity of choice with regards to an individualized budget. I am writing in opposition to S.R. No. 21 and H.R. No. 11 resolutions proposing approval of a collective bargaining agreement between the personal care attendant workforce and the New England Health Care Employees Union, 1199 SEIU.

I have several pressing concerns regarding this bill. My first concern is that many individuals only hire personal care attendants that work a few hours each week. Are these valued employees now going to be essentially squeezed out of their positions because the cost of union membership is not being compensated (as an increase funded by the State of Connecticut) in their pay sufficient to make their pay a reasonable wage. What percentage of hired PCAs work on a part-time basis – these will be the folks affected? If consumers lose workers due to this neglected oversight, the true meaning of self-determination that the disability movement has worked so hard to establish will begin to see major erosion of the intent to allow individuals choices that are “different” than institutionalized options. It seems ironical that although the Union asserted that they would be the “voice” for the employee, that I find myself speaking up for the preservation of their wages.

Secondly, I have not been notified that my daughter’s budget will be increased to address the raise in the hourly wage for Personal Care Companion. Allegedly, this was a point that families were repeatedly assured about – no loss of support hours. How can anyone in the House or Senate in good faith vote for a bill that currently does not come with the projected cost? Does the State of CT have the funds available to address these costs?

Lastly, it is not my place to question the sincerity of those who favored unionization. What I do question is whether or not voting members of the house took the time necessary to analyze all foreseen and perhaps unforeseen consequences of this action. Your yes vote or no vote directly affects Connecticut’s most vulnerable citizens, and for this reason alone I ask you to engage in conversations with those who understand the negative ramifications of this bill. Due diligence calls you to have the complete picture before you vote. And, I truly hope that you do go on record with a vote, rather than just letting this Bill pass by reason of a default system created by a somewhat obscure law that automatically passes collective bargaining proposals.

Thank-you for your considerations in this matter.