

Finance, Revenue & Bonding Committee – 4/21/2015 public hearing  
Bill 1137, *An Act Concerning the Connecticut Competitiveness Council*

Dear Legislators,

Hello, my name is Chennal Chase. I am a mother of a step son with a disability and I work 2 jobs as a direct care worker where I give care to men, women and children with intellectual & developmental disabilities.

So you may be wondering why I am here today about Bill #1137, An Act Concerning the Connecticut Competitive Council? Because I am worried it could encourage driving *down* wages in Connecticut, and I don't want anyone else to have to live as I do.

There are thousands of caregivers like me in the private sector who are barely able to care for our own families because the wages are so low. Because the state has not given any increases to either of my employers in over 7 years, there has been no opportunity for me or my co-workers to earn a higher wage at either job. In fact, the starting pay rate has been cut down to just over \$13/hour. Agencies have cut workers' hours so we no longer qualify for health insurance – even caregivers with 20 years of service on the job lost their family and individual medical insurance. We have to piece together different part-time jobs and work 60-70 hours a week. This has had an effect on agencies' ability to draw quality candidates to work here, and that hurts our consumers.

I love what I do and I take my job seriously. But this is no way to live. It's not right that people like me work this hard, but are told we should accept less and less for our work. Not in the richest state in America with some of the wealthiest citizens residing here. We can't wait any longer; we've given up too much, we are thread-bare. Peter has nothing to give Paul, and Paul already spent it all just cover the heat bill.

We need a state budget and a state government that encourages and provides *good* jobs that pay a truly decent wage to all its workers. If you move forward with this bill, I hope you will change it to focus more on making Connecticut more attractive and sustainable for working people like me. I also hope you will raise more revenue for the upcoming state budget so the state can lift up the jobs it already funds to pay at least \$15 an hour and provide quality services to the people we care for. Thank you for listening.

Chennal Chase  
27 Forest Lane  
Bloomfield, CT 06002