

Margie Santana * 194 Washington St Apt 317 * Hartford CT

*For the Finance, Revenue & Bonding Committee Public Hearing
Bill #1137, An Act Concerning the Connecticut Competitiveness
Council*

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Hi, good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, my name is Margie Santana. I have multiple sclerosis and have been a consumer on the state's homecare program since 2007. I live just down the street on Washington St here in Hartford.

I know you are grappling with the state budget and looking at different ways to bring in more dollars to our state, such as with Bill #1137, An Act Concerning the Connecticut Competitiveness Council. I'm not a financial expert, but what I do know from first-hand experience is that the state needs to raise more revenue *right now* to help people like me and lift up the workers who care for me.

I don't want to go into a convalescent home. I want to be in my home because I love where I live, I can see my children and grandchildren, and I feel more comfortable here. I have two part-time Personal Care Attendants (PCAs) -- paid by the state homecare program -- who are very hard workers. I am a very independent lady and I like to do as much for myself as I can, but they take care of my home and help take care of me.

Now that spring is here, I wish I could get out and spend more time outside, which is good for my health. But without more money for the state to invest in me, I can't get more hours of homecare services from the state. So I'm stuck inside.

My PCAs work very hard, but because the wages are so low and their hours are limited, they can't pay their bills outright; they have to pay half here and half there just to have enough money in their pockets to survive. For example, one of my PCAs is a diabetic and at times, the cost of his medications is almost \$300/month. So while he spends all day caring for me, at the end of the day he struggles to even afford medication to care for himself and his own medical issues.

Bill #1137 may or may not be useful in looking at long-term questions about competitiveness, but people like me need your leadership right now to help address our immediate needs. My homecare workers and I all live right on the edge, and each year we are told to live with less. Why are people like me forced to "compete" against each other, fighting to get the most basic of services or a fair wage that doesn't keep workers in poverty? You can help by raising desperately-needed revenue from those who can best afford it to help lift up our entire state.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to me. It's important for all of our voices to be heard loud and clear. Those who are not here are working right now, and I'm proud to represent each and every one of us that relies on the homecare program for our care or to make a living.