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**Testimony to the Committee of the CT General Assembly on HB #6878
Including Home Care Workers in Workers Compensation
Hearing March 4, 2015**

The Naugatuck Valley Project is a regional alliance of religious congregations, labor, tenant and small business organizations established in 1983 to save and create jobs, affordable housing, and ensure critical public and private services such as access to health care services in the Naugatuck Valley.

During listening meetings at our member organizations, the issue of home health care arose, which is of critical importance both to Home Care Workers, and to the increasing numbers of Connecticut's aging population who prefer aging in their homes with dignity to nursing home care. Testimonies of Home Care Workers reported:

- Subsistence level pay
- No reimbursement for travel time, mileage and parking
- Minimal training, even for skills as basic as proper patient care for everyday care needs and transfer.

The difficulties Home Care Workers face due to lack of sufficient hours and training as well as the above-mentioned difficulties of reimbursable expenses related to their employment results in an annual **worker turnover rate of 50%**. Clearly this constant need to train, however minimally, new workers, leads not just to preventing clients from developing meaningful interaction and relationship with their caregivers, but to elderly clients' health care risks,

Lack of training in the area of patient care and movement could easily cause injury both to the worker and the client, yet Home Care Workers have previously been systematically excluded from legislation designed to protect the rights and well-being of other categories of workers.

Of particular importance to both workers and elders is the lack of Workers Compensation coverage. In case of on the job injury, lack of health care Insurance and medical leave at present puts workers in considerable hardship. Home Care Workers employed by agencies are covered, but **ONLY** if the workers are **employees** of the agencies rather than contract workers.

In the case of workers employed directly by clients, the elderly or disabled would be forced either to pay Workers Compensation insurance, or reduce the number of hours of any one worker, which again leads to a lack of relationship and interaction between client and caregiver as well as a high rate of turnover.

In the interests of safety for both client and worker, meaningful relationship with the client which is crucial to elder/disabled mental health, well-being, and consistency of care, the motivation of those workers committed to health care and a critical addition to Home Care Workers' rights, The Naugatuck Valley Project speaks in favor of HB 6878.