

Beverly Thomas
49 Wilcox St
New Britain CT 06051

Public Hearing - March 8, 2016

Dear Human Services Committee members,

My name is Beverly Thomas and I live in New Britain. I've worked as a home care Personal Care Attendant (PCA) for 7 years. I have a passion for helping people, so home care is a good fit for me.

I provide home care services to people with physical disabilities who direct their own care, paid for by the State of Connecticut. The problem is that the State does not provide workers' compensation insurance to protect these self-directed home care consumers and workers. I am here to ask for your support for House Bill #5586, An Act Concerning Workers' Compensation Coverage For Injuries Sustained By Personal Care Attendants Employed Directly By Consumers In State-Funded Programs, to provide this basic protection.

I worked with a client who was a quadriplegic. One day I had to move a basket of soiled laundry that was blocking the door so he could get out to go to a doctor's appointment. When I picked up the basket, I heard a "POP!" in my back. That 'pop' has equaled 2 years of pure pain. I kept going back and forth to the doctors and finally they did a MRI – I needed surgery. I had to get 2 rods and 2 screws in my back. I was out of work for an entire year before the surgery, and then an entire year after the surgery.

Because we don't have workers' comp insurance, there was no help with the medical bills and no financial support to replace my source of income while I was unable to work. Thank God my husband had a job, he works as a cook, or I don't know how I would have survived at all.

Today, I work for a different client, but live with the fear of getting another injury. My client has MS and is starting to deteriorate. I get him out of the bed, make breakfast, run errands, take him to doctors' appointments, and maneuver him. For example, if he's sick I need to pick up his legs, and he is a big man. I tell myself to think of it as exercise, but I worry because I can't afford it my back is re-injured.

Also, my client likes me so much that he wants me to work more than 25.75 hours per week, but because of the lack of workers' comp insurance, he cannot hire me full-time. Not only do I work in fear of getting injured, but he can't have me there as many hours as he wants and needs me there. If we had workers' comp, I could rest assured I'd be covered in the case of future injury, and my client could hire me for more than 25.75 hours per week.

Please support House Bill #5586 and extend basic workers' compensation protection to us. We are providing the home care services that the State says are so important, so the health and safety of home care workers and consumers should be important, too.

Thank you. Sincerely, Beverly Thomas