

- *Eddie Stephens*
- *154 Emmett St #207*
- *Bristol, CT*

March 8, 2016

Members of the Human Services Committee,

My name is Eddie Stephens. I am here to testify **in favor of House Bill 5586, An Act Concerning Workers' Compensation Coverage For Injuries Sustained By Personal Care Attendants Employed Directly By Consumers In State-Funded Programs.**

I am in a unique position: I am a home care consumer and employer of PCAs. I actually used to work as a PCA to provide care for someone else. But now I need those same services for my own independent living.

I am a low-income individual who receives Medicaid assistance through the D.S.S. home care waiver program. I became sick on January 16, 2011. I would later learn that I developed pancreatitis. Doctors also discovered a cancerous tumor in my colon and borderline diabetes. Just last year, doctors amputated my leg from above the knee due to my poor circulation and diabetes.

My PCAs do incredibly physical work. They help me get dressed, they transfer me, they assist me with everything. That is why it is absolutely absurd that PCAs are not covered under workers' compensation. If they

worked in McDonald's or even for a home care agency, they would be covered the second they clocked in.

The current law says if one of my PCAs works more than 25.75 hours per week for me, I am required to have workers' compensation insurance. The only problem is that I am low income. I would love for one of my PCAs to work for me full-time, but I can't afford to buy an expensive individual insurance policy, so I am forced to split hours among two different people.

Without workers' compensation, my PCAs are unlikely to report their injuries. If one of my employees already has an injury and then tries to transfer me, not only could he injure himself more, but I am at risk of falling if I am accidentally dropped. This puts consumers like myself and PCAs both at risk.

I am grateful to receive home care services so I can live my best possible life. I pride myself on being a responsible employer. However, I cannot be one as long as my hard-working PCAs are denied basic protections. **I urge the State to do the right thing and make sure that home care workers in our fine State are treated like home care workers in countless other states and provided workers' compensation.** I hope my story will convince you why we need your help, and your support this.

I grew up in Georgia, the first in my family to complete high school. I moved to Connecticut in 1980 for greater economic opportunities.

Unfortunately, I didn't always earn enough money to live comfortably. Between periods of employment, I experienced homelessness. My experience with homelessness taught me about the need to self-advocate and not give up even when times are tough. I will not give up until we win the workers' compensation coverage we need.

Thank you for your attention.

Eddie Stephens