

Good afternoon. I am Yolanda Negrón. Thank for the opportunity to speak before you of my support of House Bill 5449.

First, I need you to understand I have a medical condition known as Osteogenesis Imperfecta (brittle bone disease). My parents were determined I was going to lead as normal a life as possible. I was going to get the best possible care (which I did at Newington Children's Hospital and Yale Medical Center); I was going to walk (which I did); I was going to get a good education (which I did through Hartford and Windham Public Schools and Eastern CT State University); and I was going to work (which I did at CT Legal Services and various state agencies).

I not only met my parents' goals, but reached many of my own. I was the first Latina elected to the then Board of Selectmen for the Town of Windham, I served on many local boards and committees (American Red Cross, local museum, Windham Hospital) and even nation-wide organizations, including several that provide support to our troops stationed overseas, organizing various drives collecting comforts from home to mail to them. I've also traveled around the U.S., Mexico, Panamá, the Caribbean and Europe.

In March and December '2008, I suffered two serious falls at work. After surgery, much physical therapy and a bunch other treatments, I find myself in this wheelchair permanently. May I add, I also fractured my left wrist and had a second surgery. - I am left-handed.

Around June 1, 2010, I was informed by Staff Mates (the company that provides my Home Health Aide and Home Maker services) that Workers Comp was refusing to pay any further for said services.

For six to seven weeks, I was without services. For all these weeks, I was depending on family and friends to assist me with cooking, keeping my home clean and with one of the most private daily tasks - showering. Having to have my sister, my sister-in-law, my niece, my next door neighbor, other friends come into my home - not to have dinner, not to watch a movie, but to help me shower. Take all my clothes off, get totally naked, be assisted by them in and out of the shower, assist me with drying, dressing, etc.

This was both embarrassing and even humiliating. One thing is to have to do this in front of a professional (doctor, nurse, CNA); but it definitely brings things to another level when you find yourself having to do it in front of family and friends.

And if that wasn't humiliating enough, Workers Comp denied services a second time about 2 years ago! The second time, the issue was resolved by my attorney via several telephone calls; therefore, we did not have to go to a hearing; but again, until it was resolved, I was depending on family and friends to shower.

Worker's Comp has denied my services stating my pre-existing condition of OI is what is causing me to need the services and therefore, is not "injury-related." Except as I explained earlier, I was very active during all those years. I was able to dress, undress, shower, clean my home, travel, walk and do so many things INDEPENDENTLY. Today, I am not even able to

shower on my own.

I end with this: if you could not shower on your own, which family member would you call to help you? Which friend or friends would you call to help you? Thinking about it? I had to also; except I then actually had to do it. Otherwise, I would have had to spend 6-7 weeks without showering....