Lance Porto
104 Centerbrook Rd
Hamden CT 06518

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Dear Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee,

My name is Lance Porto and I am a D.S.S. consumer from Hamden and I receive state-paid home care services in my home. Today I am here in support of Senate Bill #210, AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION LIABILITY FOR INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING SERVICES FROM PERSONAL CARE ATTENDANTS. I have asked my Personal Care Attendant (PCA) Jullet Fraser to read my testimony on my behalf.

I was born with Myotonic Dystrophy, which is a form of Muscular Dystrophy. That didn't hold me back from living a full life. In my younger years I was very active: I played hockey, baseball, and I even did body building! I put myself through culinary school and became an accomplished Executive Sous Chef. I traveled all over the country to cook fine cuisine, from Long Island to California, but returned to Connecticut to share my love of Italian food at local-area restaurants. I worked 6 days a week, 12 hours a day.

My neurologist wanted me to quit in 1984, but I was great at my job and I loved it. I wanted to leave on my own terms. It wasn't until 1996 that I realized I had to leave the job that brought meaning to my life. My physical condition continued to go downhill, and by 2003 I had to hire my first PCA to assist me with daily living.

My disease causes the muscle tissues to shrink in my body. This makes me feel weak and unable to move around a lot. I am in pain every single day

from the time I get out of bed until the time I go to sleep. I rely on my PCAs to cook, clean, bathe me, do my laundry and take me to my doctor's appointments. I can't even go into the shower anymore so my PCAs have to wash me in my chair. You name it and they do it for me! If I didn't receive the services my workers provide me, I wouldn't be able to eat and I would starve in my own home. I am more dependent now than ever before.

I receive 35 hours of services per week, but I have to split my hours up between two PCAs. Neither one of them has workers' compensation because of the State law. One of my PCAs works 7 days a week with 7 clients and travels all over the state, just to make ends meet.

Taking care of me is a very physical job. Just yesterday, I fell. I got out of bed and my legs collapsed under me. When I fall, I am unable to get up. My PCAs need workers' compensation---I don't want to risk anyone getting hurt, myself included. If anything happens while my PCAs help me go about my day-to-day life, I am liable. If she trips and falls down my very steep stairs while doing my laundry, she could be seriously injured and I could get sued.

I can't afford to be held liable. After I pay my bills I have no money left over. I had to give up my car because I couldn't afford the payments. My food stamps barely cover my food, so I have to limit myself to two meals a day. If I were sued, I would lose my house, the very house my mom bought. There is no way that I can pay for workers' compensation out of my own budget. In other states, consumers like myself are protected from liability when they participate in the home care Medicaid program. It is unreasonable that PCAs, whose wage comes entirely from the state, are carved out of workers' compensation protections here in Connecticut.

I never let my disease rule my life. Never have and never will. Please do the right thing and don't give up on protecting me. My PCAs and I deserve it. Please pass Senate Bill #210 to provide critical workers' compensation protection.

-Lance Porter