

Rose Dechello  
470 Main Street Apt A7  
West Haven, CT 06516

February 11, 2016

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Rose Dechello, and I am a DSS client receiving state-funded homecare services in my home. I wish I could be at the State Capitol myself to say these words, but my wheelchair can't go over ice and snow easily. But I wanted my word to get out to let you know how serious I am about my **homecare workers needing workers' comp insurance coverage.**

I've been on the DSS Medicaid waiver program for 13 years; I was one of the first people on the program. Before I became disabled, I worked all my life in retail and in the food service industry. I worked from age 17 until age 50, when I became disabled. At the time, I was working as a pharmacy tech at a drugstore, and one day out of the blue, my legs gave out underneath me. Since then, I've had 2 hip replacements and a knee replacement. I also had breast cancer, and have severe arthritis in my lower back. They said it was the standing for so many years that put too much pressure on my back and hips. I am also incontinent and wear diapers. I am telling you my personal challenges and medical problems so you can understand how much I really need what I call "My girls!" Since coming on the program 13 years ago, I've been able to rely on the girls who come to my home to care for me to help me get through the day.

Without my girls, I would not be able to function. With an aide, the process of dressing myself takes only 10 minutes; but if one of my girls can't make it to work and I have to do it myself, it takes me an hour and half and I end up out of breath and with severe pain in my back. Beyond basic everyday tasks, my girls help me do the things that make me feel like a person. Because of my disabilities I can't cook, but as an Italian, I love to prepare the seasonings for my food and then have the girls cook it for me. That simple

process of helping to prepare my own seasonings makes me feel like a person. If I didn't have my girls at all, I would have to be cared for in a nursing home, but I want to be home where I can protect my independence as much as I can.

It is important to me that my caregivers get workers' comp insurance. Two winters ago, a former aide slipped on the stairs at my apartment and hit her back. She was not able to work, but because she did not have workers' comp insurance, she had no choice but to sue my landlord to hopefully win some sort of monies to support her children. I felt badly for her, because she was hurt and couldn't support her family. I also struggled because I no longer had care for those hours. Because of the lack of workers' comp insurance, state law says there is a limit that any one caregiver can work for me of 26 hours per week. So while my injured aide could not work, I couldn't get my other worker to fill in those missing hours because she was already at her maximum number of hours per week. As a result, I had to redo the entire schedule and have my one remaining worker do less hours each day so then they could fill the days my injured worker could not work. So for 3 months while she my injured worker was out, my entire life and lives of my workers was uprooted. It also made me nervous, because what if she sued me, too? **If we had had workers' comp insurance, my injured aide could have gotten the care she needed; I would have been able to rest assured that my other aide could fill the hours to give me the care I needed; and I wouldn't have had to live with the anxiety that I would be sued.**

I love my girls, and I need my girls. But my girls need protections on the job, and I need to live without the anxiety of losing care or getting sued if one of them gets hurt while she's caring for me. I wish that you would please consider funding workers' comp insurance for homecare workers, not only for myself, but to help the thousands of others that are worse off than I am.

-- Rose Dechello