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Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee,

I work as a Personal Care Attendant (PCA), and I would like to talk to you about the need for budget funding to provide Workers' Comp insurance for the homecare providers serving DSS Medicaid waiver self-directed consumers.

I started in health care when I was 18. I love helping others and my dream was always to become a nurse. A woman I cared for at a rehab clinic liked the work I did and asked me to provide home care services for her once she was discharged. There's nothing I wouldn't do for her.

I love the one-on-one opportunities I have with my client now. It feels good to know the difference I'm making in someone else's life. The woman I care for is diabetic and has arthritis. She can only walk so many feet without using her electric wheelchair. I get her out of bed, fix her breakfast and lunch, dress her, do her laundry, clean her house, run her errands, and take her to her doctor appointments. I also do "assists" by helping her maneuver when she's not feeling well. Without me she wouldn't be able to take care of herself because of her health condition. I love knowing that I'm able to help live independently in her own home with dignity and respect.

As home care workers, we deserve to be recognized and protected on the job. But the state doesn't provide workers' compensation insurance for DSS self-directed consumers and their homecare workers. If I get hurt on the job, who's going to pay my hospital bills? If I can't work and support my family, who would cover my household bills?

A second problem is created due to the lack of workers' comp insurance: state law says we can't work more than 25.75 hours per week for one consumer (client). Like me, my coworkers also work the maximum number of hours per

week for our client, so if one of us is hurt and can't come to work, no one else can cover their shifts. And if one of us can't be there to care for her, she's basically on her own. At times, it has taken her over an hour and a half to get dressed on her own. Even making a cup of coffee takes a lot out of her, and cooking is out of the question. So if I'm not there, she may not get out of bed or eat. In the past, if I've already worked my 25.75 hours/work but my client still needs care, I still go over and help her out for free. Neither of us should have to choose between her going without the care she needs and me working for free. If we had workers' comp insurance, we would be protected in case of injury, but our clients would also be reassured that they could have another worker step in to take our place without being limited by the maximum 26 hours per week

Finally, because we aren't allowed to work more than 25.75 hours per week for a single client and we're underpaid, many of us work multiple clients to support our families. I now work 7 days per week. It takes a toll on me and means I spend less time with my sons. With over 20 years of experience in the health care industry, it is inexcusable for me and my family to just barely scrape by. There are times when I need a babysitter to go to work, but because I can't afford a babysitter I can't work.

I really believe we can have a better way of living. We need to be recognized as a key part of life. Clients depend on us and we depend on them too. This is a profession and a career. Part of recognition means gaining the protection of workers' comp insurance, which would not only protect us in case of injury, but would protect our clients and make this a more stable job that we can support our families on.

Thank you for your consideration.