

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

February 11, 2016

Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Eddie Stephens. I am here to testify **in favor of finding funding for worker's compensation for Personal Care Attendants (PCAs)**. I am in a unique position: I am a consumer-employer of PCAs, and prior to requiring services for my own independent living, I worked as a PCA to provide care for someone else. I am a low-income individual who receives Medicaid assistance and I have been a low-wage worker for most of my adult life.

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 became sick on January 16, 2011. I would later learn that I developed pancreatitis, which would lead me to become a consumer-employer in the Connecticut Medicaid waiver program. 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.

As a consumer we all know that the prices of everything are skyrocketing and my PCAs can't afford to support themselves making \$13.53 per hour, the maximum wage rate established by the State. My workers are limited to 25.75 hours per week, even though I require more services. If one of my PCAs works more than 25.75 hours per week for me, I am required to pay for their worker's

compensation. 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 it so I am forced to split my hours among two different people.

It is absolutely absurd that my PCAs, regardless of how many hours they work, are not covered under worker's compensation. If they worked in McDonald's or even for a home care agency, they would be covered the second they clocked in. My PCAs do incredibly physical work. They help me get dressed, they transfer me, they assist me with everything.

Without worker's 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 This outdated worker's compensation law puts consumers like myself and workers at risk.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 homecare workers in our fine State are treated like home care workers in countless other states and provided workers compensation.**

Thank you for your attention.

Eddie Stephens