

Beverly Thomas
49 Wilcox St
New Britain CT 06051

February 11, 2016

Dear Appropriations Committee,

My name is Beverly Thomas and I live in New Britain. I've worked as a home care PCA for 7 years. I have a passion for helping people so home care is a good fit for me.

I provide home care services to people with physical disabilities, paid for by the State of Connecticut. The problem is that the State does not provide workers' compensation insurance to protect all home care consumers and workers. I am here to ask for your help to find the funding necessary to provide this basic protection.

I started work with a client who was a quadriplegic. One day I had to move a basket of soiled laundry that was blocking the door so he could get out to go to a doctors' appointment. When I picked up the laundry basket of soiled laundry, I heard a "POP!" in my back. That 'pop' has equaled 2 years of pure pain. I kept going back and forth to the doctors and finally they did a MRI - I needed surgery. I had to get 2 rods and 2 screws in my back. I was out of work for an entire year before the surgery, and then an entire year after the surgery. I went to a lawyer, but there was no one that could give me money to help me survive because we don't have workers' comp insurance. Thank God my husband had a job, he works as a cook, or I don't know how I would have survived. We had to cut back drastically in our budget but we did make it through.

Today, I work for a different client but live with the fear of getting another injury. My client has MS and is starting to deteriorate. I get him out of the bed, make breakfast, run errands, take him to doctors' appointments, and maneuver him. For example, if he's sick I need to pick up his legs, and he is a big man. I think of it as exercise, but I can't afford to reinjure my back. He likes me so much that he wants me to work more than 25.75 hours per week, but because of the lack of workers' comp insurance, he cannot hire me full-time. Not only do I work in fear of getting injured, but he can't have me there as many hours as he wants and needs me there. If we had workers' comp, I could rest assured I'd be covered in the case of future injury, and my client would love to hire me for more than 25.75 hours per week.

I know you have a very hard job ahead of you. But we are providing the home care services that the State says are so important, so the health and safety of home care workers and consumers should be important, too. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Beverly Thomas