

# CIVICS LEAGUE for DISABILITY RIGHTS

People with disabilities taking action together.



August 21, 2025

Testimony of Kelly Irish

Public Hearing on the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program (CDPAP)

August 21, 2025 – Senate Hearing Room, 19th Floor, 250 Broadway, New York, NY

Good morning, chairs, members of the Committees, and all present.

My name is Kelly Irish, and I am a African-American woman with a physical disability who relies on the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program to live independently in my community. I have been part of this program for many years, and I can tell you firsthand that the recent transition to a single statewide fiscal intermediary — Public Partnerships LLC (PPL) — has caused serious harm to my daily life, my health, and my dignity.

When I started with PPL, there was no training — not for me, and not for my Consumer Directed Workers (CDWs) — on something as basic as clocking in and clocking out. To this day, we are still having trouble with the system. Every single day, I have to interrupt my schedule and spend hours on the phone with PPL because one of my workers is unable to clock in or out. Hours of my life — hours that should be spent working, resting, or taking care of myself — are consumed by fixing problems that should not exist in the first place.

The situation has gone beyond inconvenience. On August 1, 2025, one of my CDWs — a woman who has worked for me for eight years — came in to work and told me she was quitting the next day. Not because she wanted to leave, but because PPL still had not paid her for all her hours, and in some cases had not paid her at all. This is a loyal worker who knows my care, my needs, and my routines inside and out — but she has bills to pay like anyone else.

Before PPL, when Concepts of Independence was the fiscal intermediary, issues like this were rare and handled quickly. Now, under PPL, I have ongoing problems with my workers not being paid overtime or holiday pay correctly — if they're paid at all. This isn't just about money. This is about my ability to retain trusted workers who know me and can keep me safe, healthy, and independent.

When my CDWs leave — especially my most experienced ones — replacing them is not simple. It's not like hiring for any other job. My care is intimate, personal, and specialized. Losing a trusted worker means losing part of my autonomy. It means risking my health. It means losing the stability I need to live in my own home instead of being forced into an institution.

This is not just my story — it's the reality for so many people with disabilities across New York State who rely on CDPAP. The decision to hand over the entire program to a single fiscal intermediary that has proven unable to meet the needs of workers and consumers alike was not just an oversight — it was a critical mistake. And it is a mistake that disproportionately affects people like me — disabled people, many of us people of color — whose voices were not sought or centered when this decision was made.

When those without lived experience make unilateral decisions about programs like CDPAP, they often overlook the human cost. They look at numbers, contracts, and “efficiencies,” while we — the people living this reality — are left dealing with the fallout. And that fallout is devastating.

I am here today to say plainly: CDPAP works when it is run by people and organizations who understand the needs of the disability community, who treat workers fairly, and who respond quickly when problems arise. Right now, under PPL, the program is failing both workers and consumers — and that means it's failing the mission it was created for.

I urge you — for the sake of my independence, for the safety of my workers, and for the dignity of the disability community — to take immediate action to address these failures, and to re-examine whether a single statewide intermediary is truly serving the public good.

Thank you for your time, and for the opportunity to share my story.

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