

I want to thank Senator Rivera and Senator Skoufis for the chance to speak here today. My name is Lolli Edinger. I am a Personal Assistant through the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program or CDPAP. I am also an advocate with Caring Majority, a coalition of homecare workers, older adults, disabled individuals, and family caregivers...Real people, trying to live our lives with dignity. This group of amazing people gave me strength when I began my advocacy with the Fair Pay for Homecare campaign and even more so now as I sit here before you.

I started working in CDPAP as a late-in-life career change in 2017. At that time, my friend asked if I could help care for her Grandmother. We live in a rural area; finding homecare is difficult as the wages are insultingly low and when factoring in the cost of gas for people to drive here, it means most people can not afford to take the job. At the time, I said I'd try it and see how it went. My friend's Grandmother was a grumpy old woman, who just wanted to live her remaining days in the home she had lived in since she was a young woman. I loved her and I loved the work. The night she died, I read her the Little House on the Prairie books (her name was Laura) and told her how loved she was. She died at home surrounded by her family.

I then considered training to work in Hospice work, but shortly after, I found a Craigslist posting looking for a caregiver in my area. As with many small towns, the family of the grandmother, knew this new person and took away my reservations about interviewing in a stranger's home for a job listing from Craigslist. I was hired and still work with Zack, a Quadraplegic man in his 30s. He is who brought me into advocacy and whom I still work with to this day.

I would be remiss to not include my dear, sweet Dinah, my friend's mother whom we broke out of a Nursing Home. She begged me to be her caregiver once she got out, someone she knew and trusted. And she did get out and enjoyed her life even as Parkinson's and Dementia started to take hold. She died after being admitted for Rehab at a Nursing Home when her Parkinson's became debilitating as we struggled to get her more care hours and housing modifications. However, she died after an ER visit and Hospital admission where we were told she was severely dehydrated. Her body was never able to recover. I remind myself that at least she had those years in CDPAP to live a dignified life.

The people are why I work in CDPAP, their stories are why I speak up and demand change.

While I have been advocating for many years to bring respect and fair wages to homecare workers, the recent DISASTROUS move to PPL has been all-consuming. While we have had many helpful conversations with electeds, the ones with the power to make change refuse to meet with those who are actually affected by this transition. In fact, this next part is taken directly from an email I sent to Pavan Naiu as a followup to a press conference Hochul gave in Kingston where I respectfully listened and then tried to speak with her as she was greeting the audience. I was blocked out however, and Mr Naiu kept telling me, "I got you. I hear you." and gave me his email.

"It is disheartening and infuriating to read comments like those by Sam Spokony saying that those, like me, who want the system fixed are wanting to go back to "waste, fraud, and abuse".

First, there was very little fraud, confirmed by the Inspector General. And as it was repeatedly shown, the MLTCS (I originally emailed MCOs) are the companies that were keeping insane amounts of money meant for homecare.

Second, we have asked for the return of current facilitators to FIs, many of them being Independent Living Centers. If the Governor believes these ILCs to be rife with fraud then we have so many more issues with how the Governor views the Disabled of NY.

Third, CDPAP works and is cost-effective for those who are able to self-direct. Why are we not prioritizing the most cost-effective homecare program as we look towards federal Medicaid cuts.

Lastly, by portraying the ILCs as greedy middlemen, Consumers as unable to make choices and direct their own care, and homecare workers as greedy, dishonest people who can't use the (broken) PPL applications, and by continuing to refuse to bring us to the table, the Governor makes it clear to us that she has no regard for Older Adults, Disabled individuals, or Homecare Workers.

With the 35th anniversary of the ADA just having passed, it is shameful that we have a Governor who, by her actions, seems to still have an ableist view of people who need homecare.

I ask that Governor Hochul meets with a coalition of homecare advocates immediately to hear our complaints directly and that the PPL contract is terminated or at least bring the current facilitators back as FIs so we can get back to living our lives and do our damn job.

I genuinely look forward to a response from you and, with hope, the Governor.”

I never received a reply. In fact, that has been most of our experience. Ignored or victim-blamed.

When PPL was first selected as the SINGLE Fiscal Intermediary, many of our concerns were voiced and we were told it will be ok. But it has been even worse than we could have imagined.

My testimony is that of myself and my co-workers for Zack, We were able to get most of us on the PPLs system by April 1st but it was only because I had worked as an HR Manager and Payroll for several years and knew what was needed. The system was clumsy and not intuitive. In order to get things uploaded, I had to help most of my co-workers with their private information. I spent many hours at Zacks house, unpaid, helping my co-workers get through the system not because they are not smart people as has been implied but because the system sucks and there was no HR support on PPLs end.

Despite being told repeatedly that nothing will be change, we then received offer letters for \$0.75 per hour less than we were making. A huge hit especially for caring for quadriplegic in a hard to service area.

The 1st month, we repeatedly got messages saying we were over authorized hours, which is ridiculous as Zack gets 24/7 care. We then started noticing that we were only being paid in hour increments. The rounding in PPLs Timekeeping App during clock in and clock out was adding up to more than 24 hours in a day, The 8pm to 8am staff were regularly denied their pay for the 1st part of the shift due to what the system said was too many hours entered. Eventually, that seemed to get fixed but getting the back pay took a lot on calling and reexplaining why their application was at fault, not us. At least one overnight employee has still not been paid fully for hours worked in April and is being told that it is too long ago to fix. She is looking into reporting to the Department of Labor and reporting wage theft.

I then looked into why we were only getting paid in hour increments. Turns out Zacks Authorization is reimbursed in hour increments. This was never a problem with our ILC. They paid us what we worked and then they did the math to be reimbursed. PPL seems to find this too difficult. This means for us that

if I work 11 hours and 25 minutes, I get paid 11 hours. If I work 11 hours and 35 minute, I get paid 12 hours. And when I looked at my offer letter I finally noticed that it said I would be paid "by the hour". At the time, I missed that small addition.

The timekeeping app continues to be a problem. Often requiring multiple times to get it to work. It seems to go smoothly and then break when they update something. Problems are compounded when it is difficult to reach anyone for help. My former FI, I could call and talk to someone immediately to figure it out. Same day...not months later.

We then noted that the overnight staff was not getting Spread of Pay hours while the day staff was. We noticed the timekeeping app was breaking down their shift into 2 chunks; 8p to 11:59p and 12mid to 8a and asked them if this was the issue. We were told at first that it was their policy to not pay Spread of Pay for a shift that goes between 2 calendar days and when asked again, was then told that it was actually the Department of Health's policy to not pay it. Either way, it is the hours worked in 24hr period not a calendar day. The one consistent thing about PPL is you will get a different answer to the same question each time you call.

Several of us had no Federal taxes taken out for several paychecks, with one not seeing it fixed until the end of July. The forms were filled out correctly and I am still at a loss as to what happened.

Most recently, some of us have been starting to get our notices that health assessments are due. With the ILC, I was able to call Emergency One near me that does Work Assessments and could get an appointment within the week. Now we are instructed to use a company called Mobile Health, however, when called recently, they said they didnt have any available dates in our area but they could do a telehealth visit. When asked how they could do exams like take blood pressures, he could not give an answer. Looking at their web site, I see that they are not able to handle the number of people needing health assessments and that they do telehealth visits.

I am fortunate that we do not have the additional issue of Wage Parity and the scam of Leading Edge. The transition has been a very upsetting and tiring process. It was not bumps that we have encountered but a company who does not know how NYS CDPAP works, is only in it for profits on our backs, and who makes a mockery of person-centered care. We need you to fix what the DoH, Hochul, and PPL broke. If it is not fixed, I not sure how many consumers will lose their independence and dignity and honestly, their lives.