

PPL has been a complete disaster. A disaster for disabled NY-ers receiving care and for those of us providing care.

First I'll talk about how clients are adversely impacted by the switch to PPL.

The prior system of providing care allowed a small number of rigorously vetted agencies to provide care for consumers. Those agencies were vetted by the government through the Department of Health to provide the care. Presumably those companies met standards which allowed them to be included on the list of fiscal intermediaries. Based on that list, consumers could check out the various companies to see which one would best suit their needs. Companies were almost forced to keep the quality of care high because a consumer had the freedom to choose a different company at any time. This was literally the best public/private partnership because the public consumer could utilize tax dollars to select the private agency providing the best care for their health. Competition, which America says is the best mechanism to create better mouse traps, was embedded into the old CDPAP program because the consumer had a choice.

This new system has 100% eliminated choice for the consumer. My consumer has already run into a few difficulties. Being disabled and dealing with an agency like PPL that knows it's the only game in town, can be infuriating, triggering and absolutely not cost effective. For example, my client has literally been to the emergency room on two occasions after two very frustrating calls with PPL representatives who have the nerve to end calls with the slogan "thank you for choosing PPL." We did not choose PPL.

The consumer not only didn't choose PPL, my consumer specifically chose another company, Hamaspiik. My consumer was forced to move to PPL. I'm certain the two overnight emergency room stays (one was two nights) cost the taxpayer a tremendous amount. Again, these stays were brought on due to the frustration of no longer having a dedicated case manager due to the change to PPL. With PPL, unlike with Hamaspiik, you speak to someone different every time you call in. There appears to be no accountability. You get the personality of the day along with the mood of the hour. It's a faceless bureaucracy at its worst. And this never, ever, ever happened with the prior pro-choice system. With Hamaspiik, each consumer had a dedicated company case manager/liaison. And that person had a supervisor and that one too, all the way up to the CEO/Owner. But truthfully you never had to resort to supervisors because both the private company and consumer knew the client could leave at any time. This pro-choice scenario incentivized quality care, courteous communication and prompt replies.

Moreover, children, the disabled and the elderly require the most continuity of care. They are simply the most vulnerable populations with limited ability to navigate multi-state conglomerate agencies, like PPL. This was the magic of CDPAP in its prior pro-choice form without PPL. It met the needs of the population it served. It wasn't broken. Literally not one stakeholder asked for this mandatory switch to PPL. Yet, it speaks volumes a Democratic Governor, and majority Democratic legislature selected an anti-choice, anti-competition, anti-continuity of care model for the most vulnerable population of NY-ers.

With PPL installed as the only CDPAP option, New York State has essentially crowned PPL as the king of CDPAP. This would be problematic coming from any political party. However, coming at this particular moment in time and from the Democratic Party, is ironic at best. It runs counter to the party's current "no kings" messaging at worst. It's time to De-throne PPL.

That's the consumer side. Now I'll speak on my side, as the home based caregiver.

My work is with a young man who is autistic and suffers from Major Depression. He has had bouts of suicidal ideation. I mention this because he is a high challenge patient. It is not every caregiver who would take the case. The concept of CDPAP was created for such cases. The family hires the caregiver rather than a faceless agency. This reduces turnover, which is catastrophic for disabled patients. This is the first time in nearly a decade I've been working with CDPAP where I've had to think seriously about if this is a workable situation for me. And to be clear, without a workable at home scenario for patients, the taxpayer will pay more because the patient will leave CDPAP for other, more costly government funded services. CDPAP in its old pro-choice form was a win-win-win situation prior to PPL. A triple win scenario under government funding is rare. Why mess that up. CDPAP in its prior form was a win for the consumer, a win

for the tax paying caregiver, and a win for the broader taxpayer base for many years before PPL was introduced. It seems almost insane to intentionally cause such chaos with a move to PPL. I was under the impression, at this particular moment in time, the Democratic Party stood as the party of calm over chaos. PPL has been nothing but chaos for disabled consumers and their caregivers. It's past time to De-Thrown PPL.

But moving along with my testimony.

The move to PPL was a unilateral move by the government to shift me from working class to working poor. PPL has resulted in a cut in my pay without my consent. Again, I'm seeing this Democratic Party theme of anti-consent present with this PPL move. I did not interview with PPL. I did in fact interview with the prior fiscal intermediary, Hamaspik. Hamaspik also offered a comprehensive benefits package which has now been unilaterally taken away from me with the move to PPL. PPL's "benefits" package is a joke. The kind of joke that leaves you crying instead of laughing.

First, I'll talk about the Holiday Pay that was taken from me -

One major benefit I lost was a number of religious holidays. Hamaspik offers 32 holidays every calendar year. PPL provides 6 or 7. My understanding is the number of PPL holidays decreases from there for part time workers. Holiday pay is paid at time and a half. That is at least 25 fewer days paid at time and a half. I don't know if that means anything to you. But for me it is the difference between being working class and now working poor. This is a big deal. That is essentially a month's bonus pay stripped away from me with neither notice nor my consent. Shameful!

Given this reduction in my annual pay, I fear I may now be eligible for government funded health insurance and other government funded benefits like HEAP. How does this save tax dollars? With this move to PPL, elected officials literally took money out of my pockets; food off of my table and gifts away from my family to turn me into the working poor. I truly never expected this from the Democrats I put into office. Shameful!

Second, I'll talk about the Vacation Days that were taken away from me-

With Hamaspik, I accrued vacation time. I don't think I need to explain to anyone the need for all workers to receive not only a living wage, but a dignified benefits package. I'm sure the legislature receives this, paid for by my tax dollars, however I now do not accrue even one vacation day per year. Not a single one. Not a day, not an hour, not a second of vacation time. I am a full time employee. I want that to sink in. I work with a high needs client and I have absolutely no vacation time accrual anymore because of this move to PPL. Shameful!

And, all the vacation time I accrued before the move to PPL was wiped away. I was saving hours to take a vacation this summer and those hours were stolen from me by this non-consensual move PPL. Stolen! I did not choose this employer. The State forced this relationship with PPL upon me. I lost my accrued time and benefits. Shameful!

Third, I'll discuss the Additional Extras fringe benefits that were taken from me-

At Hamaspik, my loyalty with the company was rewarded with a nutrition benefit. Hamaspik provided me with a card I could use at vendors like CVS, Walgreens and Costco for nutritional supplements like vitamins, protein powders or vegetable powders. I used my benefits at Costco for vitamins, electrolytes and green powders. I don't know the full array of options I could have chosen, but I was satisfied with my selection. This benefit had the effect of additional pay because I didn't have to spend money from my pay to be healthy. PPL doesn't offer this. PPL's closest offer is traditional, yet very, very limited flex benefits. And again, these benefits are reduced for part time employees. Not one elected official would deem the benefits package suitable for yourself nor a loved one. While I understand I am not your loved one... constituents, like myself, can at least be treated with the care and consideration offered to your loved ones. Unilaterally forcing my switch to an employer who reduces my annual take home pay is akin to treating me with hate and not love. Shameful!

The switch to PPL has created a system that makes more NY-ers part of the working poor. Why? I understand if you thought you could save a buck. But in addition to the fact you're not saving (I make less

so I pay less in taxes), you're not a private company. You are the government with responsibilities to more than shareholders. Public safety, and not profits, is the responsibility of the government. That's what Democrats repeatedly said during the height of Covid19. Profits at the expense of people should never be the goal of the government. And if it is, that needs to change. People must come before profits. Greed should not drive the gutting of the CDPAP program to collapse funding into one private company. I was unaware the move to privatize services was a Democratic Party ideal. I'm constantly being told that's what Republicans want to do. It's getting harder and harder to see daylight between the parties and moves like this make it more difficult.

I know the common response to such financial concerns is to say: 'as government we have a fiduciary responsibility to save taxpayer dollars'. Elected officials love to say: 'cost cutting measures and belt tightening must be implemented'. However, I want to remind the legislature that what they have is a responsibility to balance the budget. There is no fiduciary obligation to balance the budget off the backs of your disabled and working class constituents. Absolutely none. To do so while also eliminating choice and cutting worker pay is not only lazy legislation, it is insulting and cruel.

Finally, my last problem with PPL, is the gravest. It relates to the inhumane way in which this bureaucracy deals with people. Like my client, when I call PPL I get a new person each time. There is also no one I can email anymore. My client used to have a dedicated case manager. Now, nothing and no one. It's like calling into the IRS now. First, you get an automated system that asks you to hold.

Oftentimes the hold times are so long the automated machine asks you to leave your phone number to be called back. These callbacks can take several days to receive. My last call back took two days. This is so impersonal. This never happened when the client was with a smaller company who employs enough people to provide same day care for consumers. Imagine a disabled person having to wait two days or more for a call back. It's no wonder my client went to the emergency room after being triggered by the impersonal treatment.

Authoritarian regimes rise to power when people stop being treated as sentient humans deserving the dignity of direct one on one care. PPL treats everyone as a widget. When I finally get to speak with a PPL employee, I'm literally just an 8-digit number, which I have to recite before I can give my name. My client is a different 8-digit number, not a name. His Designated Representative is yet another 8-digit number as well. That's all we are to PPL: 8-digit numbers. This system of reducing people's identity to a faceless, nameless number was tried already in Nazi Germany. It didn't turn out too well over there. It's not working well here either.

Let's stop replicating practices which dehumanize people. Let us go back to choice, dignified compensation packages, and individualized client centered care. Please de-throne PPL now. Let us go back to what we had.

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