

Susan Schoonmaker

TESTIMONY

I work as a Personal Aide for my brother through the CDPAP system. Although I live with my brother and spend most of my waking hours with him, I am paid for a maximum of 40 hours per week.

ILC (Independent Living Center in Troy, NY) was my Fiscal Intermediary until I was forced by the state of NY to switch to PPL on 4/1/25. When that transition took place, I lost 100 of my 140 hours (the maximum that can be earned) of Paid Time Off. In addition, my rate of pay went from \$18.40 per hour to \$18.11.

In essence, I lost 100 hours of PTO and my pay rate was decreased because I was forced to switch to PPL.

I was told by Vincent Reiner at ILC on October 11, 2024 via email that my PTO hours would never expire. But then, before the forced transition of CDPAP workers to PPL as the sole fiscal intermediary for the program, Vince informed me that they would only honor 40 hours of my PTO. My final payment on 4/10/25 from ILC did include the 40 hour payout. But what about the other 100 hours that I worked very hard to earn and was saving for the next time my brother has to be hospitalized and I am not paid when he is in the hospital? No written forfeiture policy for PTO hours was EVER provided to me, my brother's other aide, or the designated representative on his case when we signed up with ILC. ILC did, however, send us a policy by email in on March 21 in response to my email asking about this policy, 10 days before the end of my employment with ILC.

My experience with PPL has been frustrating and time-consuming from the very start. The registration process was poorly organized and fraught with errors in the system. The app for clocking in and out has been problematic from the start and I had to use paper time sheets more than once. Despite my diligent efforts to be sure that my hours were submitted correctly, I went over 3 weeks without a paycheck from PPL after the transition. It was so very stressful trying to deal with the "customer support" at PPL. They rarely answered the phone, rarely called me back, and if and when I spoke with a rep, they were not clearly not well trained and therefore not very helpful. I ended up having to borrow money to pay our rent!

In the midst of all this frenzy and confusion, I spent a day in the ER at Memorial Hospital with chest pains, which I had never experienced before. I went through a battery of tests and was kept for observation for several hours. In the end, I was discharged with a diagnosis of "anxiety attack". I attribute my symptoms and medical emergency to the ongoing hassles with PPL and my uncertainty about how I could continue to make a living and care for my brother with them as my FI.

I am now getting paid correctly and on time, but the first two months with PPL was a nightmare. And they are still difficult to reach for assistance if and when another glitch comes along.

This whole initiative was ill-conceived and poorly managed. Caregivers and consumers are indeed being put in harm's way because of how unprepared and ill-equipped PPL has been to meet the terms of their multi-billion dollar contract. And I am tired of spending far too much unpaid time trying to deal with this disaster.

Many thanks,
Susan Schoonmaker
Caregiver

5 Valley View Blvd.
Apt. 111
Rensselaer, NY 12144

518-912-2611