

NMASS  
On behalf of the Ain't I a Woman?! Campaign  
212-358-0295

July 25, 2021

Dear Senator,

On behalf of the *Ain't I a Woman?! Campaign*, I am writing to you in regard to the upcoming Public Hearing: Nursing Home, Assisted Living, and Homecare Workforce – Challenges and Solutions. The hearing's intention of discussing the concerns of workers caring for some of the most vulnerable populations is important. Senator Rachel May and many advocates have proposed raising wages for home care workers which no doubt is needed. Beyond the wages, key to the deplorable conditions that discourage many from working in home care are the inhumane 24-hour shifts. Our *Ain't I a Woman?! Campaign* invites all who support wage increases to also call for the end to the 24-hour workday.

Our *Ain't I a Woman?! Campaign* is led by home care workers demanding the end of 24-hour work shifts in NYS. We have worked with Senator Persaud on Senate Bill S359 which "Places limits on the maximum amount of hours a home care aide may be required to work without voluntarily consenting to such an assignment."

Members of our campaign will testify at this public hearing to ensure the conversation around challenges and solutions for this industry include changing the law so that home attendants are not forced to work 24-hour shifts for 13-hours pay, which is a shameful industry standard imposed on thousands of workers who provide care for Medicare recipients. We understand that there is a shortage of care workers to meet the growing demands of those needing round-the-clock care. Higher wages alone are not enough to convince workers to continue working these brutal shifts of 24 hours, and higher wages alone will not provide the necessary protection to ensure these essential workers remain safe so that they can provide the best care possible.

Many of the home attendants in our campaign who have become disabled and/or have had marriages break up or children estranged from them because of working these inhumane 24-hour shifts have said there is no amount of compensation that could make up for their stolen health and lives. It is common practice in the industry to not pay workers during "sleeping hours" though the law requires them to be paid if they do not sleep. Many home care workers have told us it is impossible for them to sleep as their clients require care throughout the night. Even if there is a wage increase for these workers, too many will be pressured into working 24-hours for only 13-hours pay, which will not bring their hourly pay up to minimum wage. Legislation that focuses only on wages will fail to address this systemic problem.

Making 24-hour shifts illegal protects workers and those needing their care. We call on the legislature to enforce the existing laws to hold agencies accountable.

Sincerely,

Margaret Lee

*Ain't I a Woman?! Campaign*