

Martha Davila, Home Care Attendant

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Good afternoon, my name is Martha Davila and I work as a home care aide in New York City. I have been doing this work for 4 years. I'm also an immigrant from Peru.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today.

Right now I am unemployed and recovering from Covid-19.

Back in January, my home care agency – Preferred Home Care - sent me to fill in taking care of an elderly person. When I arrived, I could tell that two people in the house were sick.

Two days later, I started getting headaches and was dizzy. I went to the doctor and tested positive for Covid.

I was very sick – I couldn't eat, I was weak and had diarrhea for a month and a half. Eventually the sickness went to my lungs and I had trouble breathing.

Now, more than six months later, I still feel fatigued.

I feel like the home care agency that sent me to this residence put my health at risk.

As I said, I was replacing the regular aide who took care of this elderly person. The aide who was there before me had walked out and got Covid.

When I called the agency and told them I was getting sick, they told me to go back to the residence and work a half day until they could get another replacement.

I called the service coordinator to ask about the health of the client and they would not tell me. This is not usual. As an aide I need to know about the person I'm caring for.

The agency I worked for never provided us with PPE. We had to buy our own masks, gloves, and even gowns.

Before I got sick, the agency stopped providing health insurance so when I got Covid, I had to rely on government health insurance.

Even before the pandemic, the agency was poorly run.

It was a miracle if my paycheck was ever correct. It was always missing days and hours and I always had to push to get my full hours paid. This happened to most of the aides at this agency.

I've also gone into a client's home with this same agency and found no care plan. The care plan is what every aide works from to provide the needed care. Without it, we can't do our job and the client isn't getting the care they need.

Right now I'm getting ready to go back to work, but I'm still terrified of getting sick.

I feel the agencies we work for need to do a better job of taking care of the workers and the clients. The state should clamp down on agencies that don't treat workers fairly and put the health of us aides and the clients at risk.

Thank you.