

My name is Kendra Scalia and I'm a Hudson Valley Leader with the NY Caring Majority, a disabled woman using Consumer-Directed Personal Assistance (CDPA), and I am a trained healthcare policy analyst.

Last year at this time I submitted testimony to this Legislature regarding the home care crisis our state continues to ignore. I told you about my experience losing three personal assistants (PAs) during the start of COVID and how I had just one PA working seven days per week. I expressed the importance of Fair Pay for Home Care workers - to make it possible to recruit new workers to this field. And I also let you all know that, "I live in constant fear that should something happen to my personal assistant or should he find a better paying job, my literal independence and freedom will be taken from me overnight."

I wish I could sit here today and tell you that I've hired workers, am able to eat a hot meal every day, and that my fears of institutionalization are quieted. But this body failed to provide the bare minimum attention to slow down the home care workforce crisis last year. And so, today, my fears are being realized. My one PA cut back his hours because he found that better paying job. Not a single candidate in 18 months has accepted a job offer. Parts of my independence have been lost, as entire areas of my life I simply can't engage in.

Because my one PA can only work four hours at night, I'm forced to go without the toilet all day long. I stay in the same position in my wheelchair for 20 hours at a time. I sleep in my wheelchair five nights per week because I have no one available to get me out of bed in the morning. The limited help I receive is packed with bare essentials of survival, such that upkeep of my home is neglected; physical therapies and respiratory treatments are skipped more frequently than they are provided; medical appointments are all but impossible to attend in-person; and I've developed additional medical conditions that could have been wholly prevented were home care worker wages raised because home care is health care.

If you visited my home today you would find my bed covered in small plastic bins holding remote controls, switch activating buttons, telescoping reachers, and zip lock baggies of cashews, cheerios and protein bars. A dozen opened water bottles with straws floating inside line my kitchen table from one corner to the other, allowing me the ability to at least stay hydrated while I spend more than 80% of each day without care.

We need Fair Pay for Home Care in the budget (A.6329/S.5374A). Governor Hochul missed this opportunity in the executive budget - proposing one-time bonuses that will not come close to solving the home care workforce shortage. The solution is Fair Pay for Home Care - and we are relying on YOU, our state legislators, to make this happen in the budget. When our workers are paid well, disabled and senior New Yorkers who rely on home care worker skills to live independently are able to fill these positions. We're able to receive the health care we need to be safe and stay healthy.

And if you're someone who sympathizes more with the fiscal responsibility to the statewide community, I have great news for you – based on a CUNY study, Fair Pay for Home Care would generate \$5.4 billion in economic benefits for New York State! It does so while improving an essential healthcare service. The data and analysis are in, and it's simple-- we need Fair Pay for Home Care and Fair Pay for Home Care is a win-win for each constituency involved.

The time is now to address the crisis of long term care. I hope next year I find myself back at this budget hearing to tell you about the fabulous personal assistants I was able to hire after you

passed Fair Pay for Home Care in this year's budget; how my health improved and I no longer need these additional medications; and how comfortable my body feels when I am finally able to lay it down to rest on my soft, warm bed every night once again like all of you.