

Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Karlene Whonder. I'm a Personal Care Attendant and member of SEIU, District 1199 and I've been a PCA for 12 years. My consumer is schizophrenic and uses a wheelchair. She partially uses her hands and without me she wouldn't take her medication. I help her live independently and try to support her to achieve creative pursuits so she can live a fulfilled life.

My problems with my fiscal intermediary, Allied, began over three years ago. Between August and October 2016, I was not paid for the entire second pay period of each month. Three times a week for months, I would spend up to two hours on the phone trying to fix the problem. My consumer-employer asked for Allied to send her a copy of the checks they claimed they had sent me, and they said they would but never did. Finally, Allied paid me the missing wages from September and October, but they continued to claim that I had already been paid for August – I had not – and they refused to pay me for the missing two weeks. As a result, my consumer-employer chose to pay me out of her own pocket. She should never have had that burden.

At the time, my husband had been diagnosed with cancer, and I needed to alter his diet and get specific medications for him. However, because I had not been paid, I was not able to do any of those things. I had to borrow money from family to get him the medication he needed.

Since that Fall, my pay has been late several more times, and it has caused me to delay payment of my bills or buying needed medical supplies for myself. I am a diabetic, and I need to purchase expensive insulin and needles to do my injections. My pay being late has sometimes caused me to miss or delay doses of insulin, which is very serious and makes my vision blurred. Not only that, but dealing with the stress of worrying whether we'll be paid takes an additional physical and emotional toll.

I love the work I do but that doesn't pay my bills or buy my medicine. All I am asking is to get paid on time and accurately—my livelihood depends on it. Thank you for your time.