

Joint Senate-Assembly budget hearings on Governor Hochul's 2022-2023 (Human Services) – Wednesday, February 2, 2022

My name is Andrea Conneely, and I am here today to provide public input, my oral testimony, to the appropriate legislative and committees members present.

Before I even begin to share my story, I recently received an email from the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program in NY (CDPAANY) and I quote “It has been reported that Governor Hochul has an almost \$13 billion unexpected surplus.” in her state coffers. Let’s just shelf that thought for a moment as I proceed.

Clearly, the issues that I am about to articulate are personal and near and dear to my heart, because it is about my 90 year old Mother, who is near and dear to my heart. I am the daughter of Rita Grant, residing in Peekskill, NY (Westchester County). I have been her Personal Assistant for the last 7 and ½ years. My Mom is self-directing, smart, and worked until she was 82 years old for Lawyers before becoming sick with a heart condition. She, at 90, can even name all the Supreme Court Justices (she will soon have to learn the newly appointed one after Justice Stephen Breyer just announced his plans to retire).

I am part of the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program in which loved ones are able to care for their disabled family member in their home. I am paid through a Fiscal Intermediary called Concepts of Independence. My Mother, through the Department of Social Services, was adjudicated 24 x 7 LIVE-IN help. As many do in this program, I perform the assisted daily living tasks like bathing, toileting, preparing meals, doctor’s visits, etc., but beyond the obvious, I would just like to touch briefly on what else I (or any family caregiver may) do for my Mother in terms of financial accountability within her household that is a requirement in order to continue Medicaid services and to keep my Mom in her own home, where she wants to be.

Once a year we fill out the DSS application with all financial disclosures, in addition to faxing all the bills that come into her house (Con Edison Bills, City of Peekskill Tax bills, Optimum Bills) to the Pooled Trust in Rochester, NY for them to cut the checks on behalf of the household. Twice yearly Physician Order Forms are required (completed by her doctor and sent to her Managed Long Term Care

Company), field monthly well check calls made to us by her MLTC, as well as dialing in daily while working via the EVV System (Electronic Visit Verification System) from her LAN Line in which to get paid \$16 dollars an hour for 13 hours (and **I do not get paid for sleeping in her home during the night**) – Who do you know that is required to physically be at a location and not get paid. With inflation at an all-time 40 year high, how can we even exist on this small amount? Covid 19 has exacerbated the difficulties in finding homecare (PA) workers to do this type of work for such minimal pay. My husband had to recently retire from his Union Job after 37 years, to help me care for my Mom two or more days a week to allow me a needed break as I could not find anyone else willing to provide my Mom with help in relation to the hours and pay scale. It has been stated throughout all of the Zoom calls that each and every one of you has been on, that the Personal Assistants are leaving the industry because they can work at fast food restaurants for more pay. I am here to tell you that, as I'm sure you well know, they are NOT necessarily leaving the industry to go to another sector, they are securing work within the same sector, but for PRIVATE PAY for at least \$25-30 an hour cash. Westchester County is a wealthy section of New York and that type of pay is plentiful, which puts my Mom, and so many in her "Medicaid" situation, at a total financial disadvantage.

I am here to say loudly that I am fighting for the inclusion of Fair Pay for Home Home Care be included in the final budget and the state finally address not only the workforce crisis that is preventing so many folks from receiving the services they need, but to truly highlight that fact as members or those that you interact within the Executive and Legislative Branches, that YOU drive home the message to the Governor that it is imperative that investment be made in the homecare industry and that 150 percent of the minimum wage be reflected in homecare/ PA's workers wages **directly**. While I certainly appreciate the fact that I will be receiving a one-time healthcare workforce bonus, I would much rather have the Governor use a portion of the 13 billion state surplus and invest in the crucial Medicaid / homecare workforce program and not starve it to death from the inside out. The federal Build Back Better Bill has stalled, but we must not confuse what the State of New York can solely do for us TODAY, within the confines of its budget....do not ignore HOME CARE and the diminution of the workforce.

I have had the compassion and courage to fight for my Mother, but I do not only fight for just "ONE." I fight for my 57 year-old self, I fight for **all of you distinguished and educated Senators and Legislators**, who are aging at the same rate as all of us, who will need help to live with dignity in your own homes. If we don't seek change now, there will not be any homecare workers to take care of the **MANY** of us.

Listen, my Mother's days are numbered, and her suffering has been insidious and silent. I implore you all, listening today, to act within the groundswell of this movement and make the CHANGE we all seek. E pluribus unum ... "out of

ONE, MANY ."

Thank You.