

February 21, 2025

Dear Senator Hoffman and members of Senate Health and Human Services Committee:

I am writing to express my support of SF 815 regarding the addition of language permitting PCA recipients (amongst others) to sign off that a worker is capable of providing the complex care that someone receives allowing them to get the enhanced rate of pay for PCA/CFSS services.

I am an individual with a significant disability (spinal muscular atrophy) and I have been self-directing my PCA services for most of my adult life. In fact, I was one of the individuals who worked on the legislation proposing the enhanced rate of care for those receiving 12 (later changed to 10) hours or more of PCA services per day. I currently have approximately 15 staff people who rotate to ensure that my needs can be met so I can stay in my own home and work full-time – at the age of 62! It often seems like it is a second full-time job as I am constantly having to look for new staff to cover for staff who need time off or change jobs – usually for higher pay.

I recall when the enhanced rate of pay legislation was passed, legislators wanted some kind of mandatory training added in for workers to ensure they would be prepared to care for people with high needs like myself. Unfortunately, the current training does not in any way do that.

Instead we have a series of online trainings that, while may be beneficial for some people, really doesn't do anything to prepare staff to provide care to **me**. My needs are very individualized and I, with the assistance of training by my current staff, ensure that a new staff person can provide the care I need. We train new staff in things like my bowel program, various breathing apparatuses and respiratory devices, (I have 32% lung functioning) transferring and my various other healthcare needs. Staff who complete the online training does not in any way prepare them to provide my care. Also, sometimes my qualified professional (RN) can provide training, the staff turnover and need for time off makes it impossible for her to train all new staff. So I take on that role.

It is ridiculous that when my staff begin working for me, they are not even able to access the current required training to get the enhanced rate until they receive their individual provider number which could take a month or more. This results in it being much harder for me to recruit people because then they have to go through all these hoops to receive the enhanced rate of pay. It doesn't make any sense at all and seems like a waste of time and resources. Staff can still choose to do some of the training and earn the stipends offered by SEIU when applicable. However, this should not be a requirement to receive the higher wage they deserve for providing more difficult levels of care.

I strongly support SF 815 to allow individuals like myself, capable of directing their own care, to be able to sign off when they know that someone has proven they can provide the individualized complex care they need. I would be happy to answer any questions. Thank you very much for your attention to this very important issue and allowing me to provide input into the benefits of this bill.

Respectfully,

Linda Wolford, MS