



**Testimony for Joint Committee on Children, Families & Persons with Disabilities  
Public Hearing: November 15, 2011**

Hello, my name is Victoria Entzminger. I am a Personal Care Attendant and a proud member of 1199SEIU. As a Personal Care Attendant and on behalf of the more than 30,000 Personal Care Attendant 1199SEIU members, I am here to support *An Act to Establish a Task Force Relative to the Commonwealth's Direct-Care Workforce (S.45)*.

This legislation would establish a much-needed and new state task force to ensure that Massachusetts has an adequate workforce to meet the rising demand for long-term services and supports.

In my job as a PCA I provide care for my 13 year old nephew who has multiple disabilities. Because of the PCA program, he is able to receive the supports he needs while living at home with his family which is exactly where he should be. I am proud to provide him with this care, but I am struggling myself. Personal Care Attendants do not receive any health insurance through our jobs. While we provide healthcare supports to consumers, we often are not able to access healthcare ourselves.

My nephew has complicated medical needs. I did not receive any formal training to become a Personal Care Attendant. I feel strongly that the people who provide care to elders and people with disabilities at home should receive adequate skills-based training so that we can provide the best care possible. I am excited that because of my union contract PCAs will now be able to access the first-ever formal PCA training. I think this has the potential to transform the work we do in a positive way. We will still take direction and receive on the job training from our individual employers, but with additional training we can also feel more confident in the tasks we are performing and, most importantly, work toward the professionalization of the field.

By 2020, the Commonwealth's elderly population will increase by almost 300,000 and make-up nearly 20% of the state's population. My mother is already among them. She is 83 years old and lives at home. My sister, age 50, also has significant disabilities. I am here testifying not only on behalf of myself and the 30,000 Personal Care Attendants. I am also here because I care deeply about the future for my mother, my sister, and myself.

In order to meet the growing needs of both elders and people with disabilities, the Commonwealth needs to take a close look at the needs of direct care workers. This taskforce would be the right next step. It complements the work 1199SEIU is already doing – securing funding for Personal Care Attendant training and advocating for a new PCA Orientation Program. Unless we meet the needs of the workforce, the needs of our state's elders and people with disabilities will not be met.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.