

**JOINT INFORMATIONAL HEARING WITH THE  
SENATE LABOR & INDUSTRY AND SENATE AGING & YOUTH COMMITTEES  
ON THE CONSUMER WORKFORCE COUNCIL.**

**TESTIMONY BY KEITH WILLIAMS**

**TUESDAY - 4/28/09**

**9:30 A.M., HEARING ROOM 1, NORTH OFFICE BUILDING**

Good morning Chairpersons Gordner, Vance, Tartaglione, Washington and members of the Senate Labor & Industry and Aging & Youth Committees. My name is Keith Williams, and I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify as a person with a disability, and an advocate.

I live in Clark's Green, Lackawanna County, and have Arthrogyrosis, which is a congenital neuromuscular disability. I am one of the first people in northeast Pennsylvania to have enrolled in the consumer model of the Attendant Care program, which was in 1988. Since that time, I have been recruiting, hiring, training, and managing my own employees.

The program has added significant quality to my life, and has enabled to be independent and active. It has also assisted in my ability to be a taxpayer, since I have been employed at the Northeast Pennsylvania Center for Independent Living since 1987. I wholeheartedly agree with the need to provide competitive wages and benefits for attendants.

However, the CWC is not the way to accomplish this goal. I am opposed to the creation of a Consumer Workforce Council (CWC) in Pennsylvania. My concern is that it would strip consumer control from the program and severely limit choice for people who are employers of their own attendants.

The CWC will also lead to unionization of attendants. None of my attendants wish to join a union, they do not want to pay dues, and are concerned about paying dues to opt out of the union.

This is one of the most problematic aspects of the CWC, and there are many people who share my sentiments.

Many of my attendants are employed in non-health care related fields and work with me to supplement their incomes. Some are college students whose schedules coincide with my needs. All are valued individuals, without a desire or need to be unionized, In addition, they do not want to receive mandatory training. They know I'm the best judge to decide when and if training is required.

Under the current consumer model, I have the ability to determine the amount and timing of raises paid to attendants. My understanding is that I would be unable to make this choice if the CWC is enacted.

People with disabilities have spent countless hours advocating for consumer control in home and community-based services since the enactment of Act 150 and implementation of waiver funded programs. Everyone here today shares the same goal, but the CWC is ***not*** the way to accomplish it.

In addition, CWC may unnecessarily expand the costs of the state-budget and substantively alters the way in which self-directed home and community based services are delivered in the Commonwealth by adding an additional level of bureaucracy that will be costly and not needed.

Thank you for your time today, and I look forward to working with you further on this very important issue.