

## Myths vs. Facts Don't Be Fooled by the Consumer Workforce Council



The campaign, *My Life, My Choice* and other supporters of the so-called Consumer Workforce Council have been perpetrating myths and scare tactics to gain your support. They want to make home care a state-run bureaucracy. Learn the facts, tell others.

### Say “No” to a State-run Home Care Agency

**MYTH:** The Council is needed so seniors and individuals with disabilities can remain at home.

**FACT:** Older Pennsylvanians and individuals with disabilities already have the right to remain at home thanks to the services they receive from home and community-based providers. This right was affirmed years ago by the U.S. Supreme Court’s **Olmstead** decision, which ruled that all individuals have the right to receive their care in the least restrictive environment. The proposed Council has no impact whatsoever on giving people the opportunity to remain at home – we already have it. Today on any given week, an estimated 190,000 Pennsylvanians are being served in their own homes.

**MYTH:** The Council is necessary and will improve quality of services.

**FACT:** On the contrary, quality in-home services are already available and regulated through licensure by the Department of Health, and the Department of Public Welfare’s monitoring requirements. The Council would duplicate the legal responsibilities of both the departments of Health and Public Welfare since the new home care licensure regulations, which go into effect later this year, will require home care agencies to provide training, criminal background checks and communicable disease screening for workers.

**MYTH:** Consumers and families cannot find someone to provide in-home care.

**FACT:** Today, there are several ways people can find home care workers. In fact, 68,000 people are currently receiving in-home services and support under one of several state-funded programs. Also, the departments of Health and Aging have lists of home care agencies by county on their websites, and the Department of Public Welfare offers information and support from home and community-based programs in your neighborhood. In many of the Pennsylvania waivers, consumers may choose family members, friends or neighbors to provide services. Useful local information on these programs is available at each Area Agency on Aging.

**MYTH:** The Council will give people more choices and better access to in-home care.

**FACT:** On the contrary, the Council will take away consumer choice and independence by requiring that all direct care workers be employees of the proposed state-run agency. Consumers who have hired their own workers may no longer be the employer with complete control. Instead, the proposed Council would be the employer. Pennsylvania’s current strong network of almost 800 home and community-based providers could be eliminated and consumers could actually lose choice and access.

**MYTH:** The Council is needed to improve home care worker wages and benefits.

**FACT:** The average pay for a personal or home care aide in Pennsylvania is higher than the national average according to PHI. Workers' wages are largely determined by the state's reimbursement rates for home and community-based services. In addition, attendant/direct care workers' wages could potentially be decreased by the cost of union dues and deductions from their take-home pay for health insurance. Let's be clear: There's a limited pool of financial resources available to the state. Supporters of the proposed Council never address how they will access additional resources to provide increased wages. The lack of additional resources will result in larger waiting lists for services and/or less services for consumers.

**MYTH:** The Council will help rebalance the long-term care system.

**FACT:** Major federal and state initiatives are already in place to reduce the state's reliance on nursing facilities and increase the use of home and community-based services. These include the Nursing Home Transition program, Money Follows the Person and a wide range of home and community-based programs. Not one of these initiatives have needed or promoted the concept of a state-run home care Council. Under just one of these programs, more than 2,000 people have left nursing homes and moved into private homes in the community.

**MYTH:** The Council will reduce the high turnover of workers.

**FACT:** According to a University of Pittsburgh study of the home care industry in Pennsylvania, the average turnover rate is 24 percent. Under the State's current consumer employed model, consumers and attendants have the opportunity to experience a high degree of bonding, which usually leads to long term personal and professional relationships.

**MYTH:** The Council will save the state money.

**FACT:** No fiscal analysis has been done on the costs associated with establishing a state-operated Council to substantiate this claim. Nor has there been any information regarding who will bear the costs – state or county government, consumers or direct care workers, taxpayers or all of the above? With the current fiscal constraints on the state's budget, the establishment of a new and duplicative bureaucracy would surely result in increased costs and fewer dollars being available to consumers who need in-home services. The proposed Council would restrict free enterprise and create an unfair advantage in the home care industry, which has already expanded in response to the growing demand for in-home care by Pennsylvania's rising senior population.

**Coalition for R.E.A.L. Home and Community-Based Services in Pennsylvania**

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Pennsylvania Association of Area Agencies on Aging

Pennsylvania Homecare Association

Pennsylvania Providers Coalition Association

National Private Duty Association

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