



NEWS RELEASE

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Media Contact:

Christine Tondrick, Communications Director
Pennsylvania Homecare Association
(800) 382-1211 ext. 22
(717) 712-9807 – cell
CTondrick@pahomecare.org

People With Disabilities and Older Pennsylvanians Question Expense, Effectiveness of Proposed Council

Consumers, agencies urge lawmakers to question true cost of Council

Harrisburg – Opponents of the Rendell Administration’s proposed state-run homecare agency, known as the Consumer Workforce Council, today urged lawmakers to focus their attention on strengthening the existing homecare system instead of introducing another layer of bureaucracy.

Two House Committees – Aging & Older Adult Services and Labor Relations – heard testimony from administration officials as well as proponents and opponents of the Council including members of the Coalition for R.E.A.L. Home and Community-Based Services in Pennsylvania.

Testifying in opposition to the Council, William Kepner, Senior Vice President of United Disability Services, said, “The solution to better wages and benefits for direct care workers is not a state-run, state-funded homecare agency. The solution can be found by increasing the state reimbursement rate for direct care workers and allowing them to become a preferred class in the adultBasic health insurance program. These changes can be done swiftly and efficiently by the Governor and state legislators.”

Other R.E.A.L. Coalition members called for an in-depth analysis of the proposal including a financial assessment.

“My professional background is in finance and I like things to add up,” said Jesse Charles of Lancaster, who has used a wheelchair since age 20 and directly employs six attendants to assist him with basic daily activities. “But, the administration has provided no answers to questions about this new entity. My fear is that this will drive away some of my workers who don’t want or need a registry to find more work.”

Homecare agency owner Joe Bakey of Delaware County questioned the funding sources of a Consumer Workforce Council. “There doesn’t seem to be a business plan, only vague details and an estimated start-up cost of \$500,000,” said Bakey. “The state has a responsibility to taxpayers to demonstrate the full financial implications of the proposal. Before the state gets into the homecare business, a lot of questions must be answered.”

The Coalition for R.E.A.L. Home and Community-Based Services in Pennsylvania is comprised of 26 members including the Pennsylvania Association of Area Agencies on Aging, National Private Duty Association, Pennsylvania Providers Coalition Association, United Cerebral Palsy Association of PA and the Pennsylvania Homecare Association.

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