

DSS Locks Healthcare Providers Out, Refuses To Provide Answers Regarding Missing Pay

PCAs and members of SEIU 1199NE march outside the DSS headquarters in Hartford (Photo credit: SEIU 1199NE)

PCAs were turned away from DSS while trying to deliver grievances Friday

HARTFORD - Personal Care Attendants (PCAs) showed up at the offices of the Department of Social Services (DSS) Friday morning with a plan to express their continued frustration with payment issues as over 600 members remain unpaid. However, instead of getting answers or acknowledgment for their frustrations, they were met with locked doors and security guards refusing to let them into the state building.

The same building that is supposed to provide them with support, make sure they are paid and that when they have an issue help them find answers. Instead DSS turned their back on the very workers they depend while continuing to make excuse after excuse for why healthcare workers are not being made whole..

DSS expects these workers and their consumers to be their own HR department, their own payroll agents and their own case managers. All while they are trying to balance the bills that are piling up, facing eviction and dealing with growing health issues of their own.

Kara O'Dwyer in front of her Honda Accord that she now lives in, outside the DSS building in Hartford. (Photo credit: SEIU 1199NE)

Despite DSS claims that all PCAs have been paid and made whole, several members including Kara O'Dwyer, a PCA from West Haven, are still waiting to be paid for hours worked as far back as October. In addition, Kara said she found herself once again underpaid in her most recent paycheck. Kara said the struggle of living paycheck to paycheck is made even harder when you don't get the pay you are expecting,

"You plan to pay your bills and then your check is short so you overdraw your account and then you get late fees and overdraft fees. Catching up is impossible. I've been living out of my car or on a friend's couch since October because I lost my home due to the ongoing payroll issues."

Kara O'Dwyer, PCA, West Haven

While some PCAs have confirmed they have finally received their backpay, at least 690 members will remain unpaid", Diedre Murch, Vice President of the Homecare Division for SEIU 1199 New England. Murch said at one point the number of members with payroll

issues reached nearly 5,000 which represents nearly 40% of the workforce, much higher than the 10% DSS initially claimed. DSS did later verify that nearly 5,000 nonpayments did occur over a four week period between November and December.

The solution is simple. Workers want GT Independence held accountable for their mistakes by DSS, want all workers made whole for the hours worked and want DSS to address the ongoing issues that keep leading to these payroll shortages.

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ABOUT SEIU 1199NE

District 1199 SEIU New England represents 29,000 health care and service workers in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Southeastern Massachusetts. In Rhode Island, 1199 SEIU NE represents almost 5,000 members. 1199 SEIU NE is affiliated with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) - a union of over 2 million members across the United States, Puerto Rico and Canada. SEIU has been a national leader in pushing the growing Fight for \$15 and a Union movement.