



Ken Wessel, MSW, ACSW, LSW, President
2 Market Street
Paterson, New Jersey 07501

**Testimony of Ken Wessel, President, Home Care Council of New Jersey
and Executive Director of HomeCare Options of Passaic County.**

Supporting Senate Bill 2100 Expanding definition and licensure requirements for
health care service firms.

Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee

June 18, 2013

Chairman Sarlo and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Ken Wessel, and I am President of the Home Care Council of New Jersey and, for 35 years, Executive Director of HomeCare Options in Passaic County.

I am here today to convey the HCCNJ's support for Senate Bill S2100 which is the beginning of an effort to improve and strengthen the home care system that operates in New Jersey.

- Currently providers of companionship services are not regulated in their provision of care to seniors and the handicapped. Due to this omission paid companions employed by organizations offering these services can actually perform tasks that trained, professionally supervised, Certified Home Health Aides are forbidden to do under State regulations.
- While some companionship service providers state that they do not do personal care and therefore do not need oversight, others actually advertise that they do personal care. Regardless, any outside helper going into the home of a frail senior to assist them, should have some public accountability. The organization sending them should have to meet standards of hiring, screening, training, and supervision. A frail senior alone at home does not have the protections and oversight of those in an institutional or group setting. Extra oversight of the placing organization and the individual placed is appropriate in the home setting.
- Some providers feel they already have a quality service and question why they would need to go through an accreditation process. The public and the frail consumers of home care services have a right to a standard of quality and a third party assurance that the standards have been met. Third party accreditation programs recognized by NJ Medicaid as a requirement for providers of personal care services provide this assurance. Shouldn't every frail senior and handicapped consumer of home care have the right to accountable care regardless of payer source?

- The cost of accreditation may be a concern to organizations that have not been accredited. In reviewing costs of accreditation among different sized companies throughout the state, it appears the cost would be around ½ of 1 percent of budget. Costs are based on the size of the company with the smaller organization paying less. In some cases as little as \$900 per year.
- Nearly 200 Licensed Health Care Service firms are already accredited as it is required for companies participating in the Medicaid Personal Care program.
- An independent financial audit is currently only required for non-profit agencies and by only one of the four accrediting bodies. The majority of companies doing home care business with the state do not have this fiscal accountability. The state's single audit process does comprehensive testing to assure that services billed to the state have actually been performed.
- If all current providers agree to the stipulations of the Bill (which have already been met by hundreds of companies), there will be no reductions in the numbers of providers. Participation or non-participation in the proposed requirements is voluntary. No company is being forced out of the provision of services.