

My Name is Anne Meinen Albrecht. I am an employer of a Home Healthcare Provider. My Home Healthcare Provider is a proud member of AFSCME LOCAL 4802. I wouldn't be here today, without the intense dedication and quality of care that I receive from her. I suffer from multiple major medical conditions which require 24-hour care and - per my Dr.'s orders - it is not safe for me to be alone. My Caregiver has saved my life on a number of occasions; from a heart attack to frequent severe choking, falls resulting in permanent injuries to my back and knees, the daily challenges of being a brittle diabetic, congestive heart failure, and COPD to name a few.

Home Healthcare Providers are a vital, important and essential group of highly dedicated people. They provide critical life services to their clients, to those who are dealing with physical and mental disabilities, to those recuperating from injury or illness or to those of us among the 21.6% of Vermont residents over the age of 65 going through the aging process.

Vermont's Home Healthcare Providers deserve the utmost level of respect for the multitude of services they provide to our residents in need. They deserve to be paid a living wage. They deserve full medical benefits including vision and dental. For the State to offer a wage of \$14.36 (in bargaining) is blatantly disrespectful and a disgrace. It's not a living wage, it's not sustainable, it's not a living. It is barely eking out an existence. It is the main reason why we have lost so many Home Healthcare Providers that are so desperately needed by so many. As an employer, I find it equally disrespectful to them and to each client they serve. When a person can make \$18 at a fast-food place but a HHP who is providing lifesaving care can only make \$14.05 we have a situation that is out of line and unrealistic.

When you are evaluating budgets and funding and the needs of the Vermonters you work so hard for, please remember that at some point a beloved family member or you, yourself, will need the care and service of a Home Healthcare Provider. I hope you get a good one and that they will be paid the higher wages they need to continue to sustain our communities.