

## **Sarah Bennett**

Good afternoon,

My name is Sarah Bennett, I'm 22 years old, and I have been an in-home caregiver for 2.5 years in Springfield. Our job as caregivers means we take care of some of the most dependent people in our communities: the elderly, the sick, and the disabled. Caregivers are a very special group of individuals who by their very nature are loving and kind.

That kindness can leave us open to manipulation and wage theft by the companies we work for. I am one such victim. I was pregnant with my daughter when my client's spouse died, and her care needs increased as her Alzheimer's disease progressed. She went from being an 8 hour a day 5 days a week client, to a full 24 hour care client. I clocked in on Saturday morning at 9 AM and I wouldn't leave that house to clock out until 9 AM Monday morning.

My company told me I would work for 16 hours a day and have 8 uninterrupted hours for sleep. They told me that if in those 8 hours my client woke up and I provided care I would either be paid for 1 hour of care or the whole 8 hours if the care lasted longer than 1 hour. It seemed simple enough, until my client's condition worsened. She would wake up and wander around and need me to assist her and then take her back to bed. I had to make sure she wouldn't trip and fall because she forgot that I was sleeping on the floor out in the living room. She was so sweet, and sometimes she would come out in the middle of the night just to make sure I was OK:

Because I was pregnant, she was worried about me!

I provided care in this way between 12-5 AM. When I contacted my work about this, they suddenly started to change their language about the shift in order to prevent me from being paid. Their main defense was asking when she went to sleep and when she woke up at night, went back to bed and then got up for the morning. They changed their description of the shift to say I had the "opportunity" for 8 hours of sleep, but it didn't need to be consecutive. I complained about this multiple times, and they changed their story multiple times. I got the strong impression that if I continued to complain, I would be taken off that client. She was my main source of hours, so I shut my mouth.

This kind of scare tactic is wrong, and it took its physical and emotional toll on me. My wife saw the dread on my face as I went to work every Saturday and how exhausted I was when I returned Monday. I wasn't paid for my time I sacrificed, and sadly, my story is only one of many. This is why we are here today. To speak out and let you hear the stories of the people who often go unheard. We are not voiceless; we are not faceless; we reside in the background, but we are not invisible. Please remember me and my story when you make your choice on SB 669.

Thank you.