

My name is Andrew Williams, and I am the lead organizer of AFSCME Iowa Council 61. One of the many groups of hard-working AFSCME union members are the home-care providers in the Consumer Directed Attendant Care program, or CDAC for short.

CDAC providers do very important and very difficult work. Oftentimes, the most needy and least powerful of our citizens, elderly or disabled Iowans, need extra help. CDAC providers are the people who provide that extra help.

Most people don't want a stranger to help them take a bath, or change their clothes, or their diaper. These, and many more, are the types of things CDAC providers do. Most people simply do not want strangers doing these things, whether in their own home or in a nursing home.

So, when you have a loved one in need of this type of care and assistance, chances are you will make the difficult choice made by thousands of Iowans: do it yourself, even if that means you can't take another job outside of the home.

This is a choice people make because they love someone, and would be financial disaster if not for the CDAC program, which provides small payments to providers who are willing to do this work.

Many politicians, who seem to characterize any government program or assistance as a "handout," seemingly aren't stopping to think about the value of such a program. The consumers of this type of care will either end up in a nursing home or a group home... OR, they will stay in their own home, at a much-reduced cost to the state. On top of that, people are far more comfortable in their own homes, with the help and company of someone they know and love. It's a win-win situation for both sides.

But over the last few years, I've been getting more and more phone calls from providers with concerns about the program. Units of care are being cut constantly from care-plans, in an effort to shave costs. Providers are told that they shouldn't be reimbursed for certain types of care because they "should be doing it anyway" because their consumer is their child. For the past two years, providers have been notified on and off by the state that they would no longer be able to provide individual CDAC services, but would have to work through an agency instead...presumably because of unfounded claims of rampant fraud.

And now, providers have been given little to no guidance or instruction on what will happen to the CDAC program and their loved ones when the state outsources their waiver services to for-profit corporations. The information they have received has been inaccurate, confusing, and deceptive.

In mid-August, thousands of individual CDAC providers in Iowa received a letter from Amerigroup. Along with this letter was a 47-page contract, which providers were instructed that Amerigroup “must receive” their signed agreement by September 14th, 2015.

We received dozens of phone calls about this document. People were worried and didn’t understand what they were being asked to sign. Some parts of the contract included language saying that the provider, by signing the contract, was agreeing to accept “as payment in full, in all circumstances, the applicable Amerigroup Rate...” for their services. But, at no point was the provider ever actually informed of what that rate was.

How many people in this room would accept a job without knowing what they were going to be paid for doing it? Nobody. Yet, that’s what providers were being instructed to do.

When I sent an inquiry into Iowa Medicaid Enterprises about these letters and the contracts people were receiving I was told simply that “the provider should contact Amerigroup and they would assist them in completing the application.”

So, we had members call Amerigroup and ask them, and we called Amerigroup ourselves... and come to find out, Amerigroup said that the contracts were sent out “in error.” They were intended to be sent only to agencies and organizations... not the multiple thousands of individual providers who are caring for a very close loved one, and who rely on this program to provide a very basic level of income and peace of mind.

When one provider asked Amerigroup if they would be sending out a letter to clarify that this document was sent in error, the provider was told that “it would be a good idea,” but to my knowledge that has not happened.

If they weren’t supposed to get this letter, then why wasn’t Iowa Medicaid Enterprise able to say that to me when I asked about it? Why weren’t the providers informed from someone in authority that this letter was something they didn’t need to worry about? Why, instead, did we allow thousands of already-vulnerable

Iowans to be scared into thinking that they had to sign on with a private company they knew nothing about in order to stay on the waiver program?

Many providers have already been fighting to continue to receive payment for the care that is necessary for their loved-one. When the condition of their child hasn't changed, but they are told that IME will now only pay for 50 units of care rather than 75, providers are right to question the purpose of the program. Outsourcing these programs to private companies is just going to further pressure case-managers to cut down on units of care... and put more and more strains on families which are simply trying to get by. It might force some families to say they simply cannot afford it anymore...

And, in doing so, it will also end up costing the state more money... because those nursing homes and group homes charge a lot more money to Medicaid than an individual CDAC provider does.

It is so easy for people to look at programs like this and see them in terms of the numbers on the page... to tout these big amounts of money that the state can somehow magically save simply by having a private company run it... and claim that we're doing a good thing. But if you look past the numbers on that page, you cannot help but notice that those numbers are connected to REAL PEOPLE. And every dollar "saved" is, in all reality, an Iowan who is simply going to have to keep doing more with less... a person who will keep needing to spend 20 minutes a day to clean up their disabled parent in the bath, but who will only be paid for 10 minutes, because some manager at Amerigroup wants to make sure he adds to his \$800,000 bonus from last year.

This will hurt people. Real people. And we shouldn't be doing it.

