

# Open letter to the Butte County Board of Supervisors

**W**e represent the front line of health care, the in-home care workers. We provide daily care to hundreds of local residents who otherwise would be forced to live in institutions or assisted care facilities. Our work helps these residents stay in their own homes, providing them better quality of life as well

as untold savings in added health care costs. Yet, home care providers through the state's In-Home Supportive Services (IHHS) program are now facing the loss of our own health care coverage.

Our union – the United Domestic Workers of America, AFSCME Local 3930 – has been without a contract with Butte County for nearly six years. During that time, UDW members have continued to do our jobs for the minimum wage of \$12 an hour. This is hard, often physical work. Home care workers do all sorts of tasks – cleaning, bathing and feeding those who need assistance as well as making them as comfortable as possible. We are true day-to-day caregivers. Not many people are willing to do this work for \$12 an hour. Because of this, thousands of care hours are unmet every year in Butte County.

Some of us care for a family member, others care for members of the community. Our union represents those who have taken on the difficult job of providing 24-hour assistance to elderly relatives with dementia or other health issues. We also represent workers who care for children with disabilities or complex medical challenges. Whether we are looking after loved ones in our families, or caring for community members who need our assistance, we do this as professional caregivers. Many of us left paid, full-time jobs to do this work, and we frequently work many unpaid hours.

Access to affordable health care coverage is one of the few

perks of this job. In the case of family members, that coverage allows us to keep working and helping those who need it most. Now the board of supervisors wants to take away our health coverage in exchange for a 25 cent an hour raise. We need a raise but, like everyone, we need health care, too.

This issue truly hits home for us. For example, UDW member Carnella Marks cares for her father-in-law, Albert Smith, who has dementia. Without health care coverage, she could no longer do this job.

"It's hard to focus on your client's needs when you can't pay your bills," said UDW member Barbara Wilson, who provides in-home supportive services for her husband, Clyde. "We need a pay raise, so we can concentrate on providing the best care possible."

The irony is that county funding for in-home supportive services is matched by state and federal agencies. The county would pay only 16.5 % of any pay increase for our workers. That's basically free money that will go right back into our local economy. Why would the county not take advantage of such a high return on their small investment?

We're part of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Workers, the nation's largest trade union of public employees. Although we serve in homes, we are really public employees. We're not asking for much. In our current negotiations, we've requested a 50-cent per hour raise whenever the minimum wage increases and additional funding towards the development of a more substantial health care plan.

Supervisors, we ask you please: Don't take away health care benefits from home care workers.



left: Carnella Marks provides in-home care for her father-in-law, Albert Smith.  
right: Barbara Wilson serves as caregiver for her husband, Clyde.



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**Show your support!**

Tell the Butte County Supervisors what you think when they meet at **9 a.m. Tuesday, Sept. 24**, at the county government offices, 25 County Center Drive, Oroville.

**Or call the Board of Supervisors today at 1-855-912-7804 and tell them that caregivers deserve a raise!**