



## **1199 SEIU Negotiates First Contract For 25,000 Massachusetts Home Aides**

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**BOSTON**-Personal care attendants who provide home care for Medicaid patients in Massachusetts overwhelmingly have approved a first collective bargaining agreement with the state calling for an immediate 7 percent pay hike and establishment of health insurance coverage and paid leave, Local 1199 of the Service Employees International Union announced Nov. 25.

More than 25,000 personal care attendants (PCAs) are covered by the pact. The vote to ratify was 4,499 to 59, according to union spokesman Jeff Hall.

Negotiations were authorized under a 2006 law enacted to promote the retraining and retention of home care aides. Talks began early this year after PCAs voted overwhelmingly last November for representation by Local 1199 (217 DLR A-10, 11/9/07).

The hourly wage of \$10.84 will be increased by 76 cents retroactive to July 1, 2008. Pay will rise by 40 cents in the second year, and 48 cents in the third year, going to \$12.48. PCAs had received only one pay hike since 2000, a 72-cent-per hour boost in 2005, according to the union.

Jack Boesen, director of the Personal Care Attendant Quality Home Care Workforce Council, the state panel that bargained with the union, called the settlement “an important part of the council's effort to increase and maximize opportunities” for the elderly and disabled to continue living in their homes. PCAs provide care for about 16,000 individuals in Massachusetts, he said.

“The contract preserves consumer control of the program under which they retain the unrestricted right to hire, supervise, and fire PCAs,” Boesen noted.

Under the new contract, the state will contribute a total of \$2.25 million toward a paid leave program-\$750,000 in the first year, \$500,000 in the second year, and \$1 million in the third year. Any amounts not spent can be carried over into subsequent years; the parties will continue meeting to work out leave eligibility, Boesen said.

The parties also will conduct a study to look at options available for health coverage, Boesen said, and they will reopen the agreement after the study is completed. The state has made a commitment to contribute toward health coverage, while the union has agreed to acknowledge the state's fiscal constraints, he said.

Hall said the parties also will continue to talk about procedures for PCAs to become union members and pay dues.