

JUST WORDS

The Stories of Working People In Our Community

Episode 7: Gloria Knight

Welcome to Just Words-the stories of working people in our community.

Gloria Knight is a daycare provider who has been working in Prince George's County for 7 years. She contracts with the state to provide low-cost daycare for low wage workers, the children of people on public assistance, and people going from welfare to work. Over the next few weeks, we'll be hearing her story. This is how it begins.

In 2005, I was involved in an accident. A couple of my daycare kids were with me, and my granddaughter. One of the children was on the bicycle and they told me, grandma, we're having problems with the bike, it won't stop, the brakes are messed up, so I said, okay, let me check it out. So anyway from what I understand, I got on the bike, which was a regular bike, and I was testing it out for the children. And maybe halfway down the block, there was a slight embankment and I guess because the brakes were gone on the bike, I couldn't stop, and it threw me off the bike. When I was thrown off the bike, I immediately went into a coma for nine days. Nine days. I was in a coma for 9 days. The doctors told my family I probably wouldn't live. During my stay there, I didn't have any health insurance. Not that I didn't try, because when I made up my mind 7 years ago that childcare was what I was going to do, I started looking and calling and checking. The cheapest thing I was finding was 450, 500, 5 and some change, a month. Now remind you, I am just starting childcare, so really I couldn't afford any health insurance. I just continued on without health insurance. So, on the 9th day, I came out of the coma, the doctor came to my room, he said, Ms. Knight you can go home? So after 9 days of laying in a coma, they released me, and I went home.

After working in daycare for 7 years, one bad accident leaves Gloria Knight with a 50 thousand dollar hospital bill. She responded like many of us would; she began to think about finding another line of work.

Even in my sickbed, I was lying there and saying, Lord, I don't even know if I can stay in childcare, they have no benefits, and I have nothing to look forward to. We've got some people that have been in daycare for about 25 to 30 years. You know that 25-30 they have never had any benefits because we don't have any. That means 30 years they have put into childcare and they have nothing to fall back on. That means no retirement, no pensions, and above all, they have no health insurance. And the money we get from childcare isn't a whole lot of money. So I said, I don't know, I might just get out of childcare.

Gloria is like thousands of childcare providers contracted by the state who have no health care, no pensions. What if they were to find other jobs, what would be the effect on society? Join us next week.

Music: Montreal Black Community Youth Choir, *Trying Time*

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