

JUST WORDS

The Stories of Working People In Our Community

Episode 8: Gloria Knight

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

Gloria Knight is a daycare provider in Prince Georges County. In 2005, she was involved in an accident that left her with a 50k hospital bill. Like thousands of other day-care providers in the state, she can't afford health insurance. These daycare providers are contracted by the state to provide subsidized daycare. Some of them have joined together to form a union. They feel the state should help make healthcare affordable.

I am contract with the state when I work with families that are on vouchers. And the way the voucher works is, the person goes to the state and the state finds out what income is, and according to what their income is, they have to pay a copay. The person brings the voucher papers to me and I fill them out and send them to the state, and they send me a check. You may have a young lady in school, that may be on public assistance, but is going to school to better herself. It's possible that they pay all her childcare expense because she is not really working, she is in school, and she's on public assistance. Then there may be a parent that's working but she's not making big bucks. So they might pay 80% of hers and she has to pay other 20%.

What would happen if day-care providers decided to look for other work, work that provides benefits? The effect could be more deeply felt that one might imagine.

If everyone came out of childcare, a lot of parents would have to go back on public assistance because they would be able to make it. Then poverty is going to increase again, where now, like we said, we are trying to eliminate poverty by us being there to help the state. But the state is not doing anything to help us. Nothing!

Despite this, Gloria Knight chose to remain a day-care provider.

But I have this little boy named Malik. He can't hear, he can't talk, he's special needs. I've been having Malik since he was three. Took some classes, learned how to do sign language, taught my kids sign language so they could communicate with Malik, and things started working a whole lot better. So I still have Malik and I've been having him since he was three. Now he is twelve. And I think that is one of the main reasons when I was lying in that bed, I said what's Malik gonna do, what malik gonna do? It's not all about you, it's about your children. So I said, No, I said, something has got to give. And that next day SEIU knocked on my door.

Next week, Gloria tells us about her efforts to organize childcare workers in Maryland in the hope to form a union and get healthcare.

Music: Anita O'Day, *God Bless the Child*

Produced by Jessica Phillips. Hosted by Marc Steiner.

Through a grant by the Open Society Institute-Baltimore. Visit them on the web at www.osi-baltimore.org.