

Testimony of Cambar Edwards
Certified Nursing Assistant
Member, New England Health Care Employees Union, District 1199, SEIU Healthcare
Before the Human Services Committee, supporting Bill No. 5072:
An Act Concerning Appropriations to Improve Nurse Staffing Ratios

I want to thank the members of this committee for raising this important bill to increase staffing levels in nursing homes.

Good morning everyone. I'm Cambar Edwards and I've been a Certified Nursing Assistant, or CNA for more than thirteen years. I work at Kimberly Hall North in Windsor, and I live in Hartford. I'm also a union delegate there and a member of District 1199.

As any nurse or aide who works in a nursing home can tell you, you can't give quality care if you don't have enough staff. But I also want to talk about something else – quality of life. I'm supporting Bill 5072 because it will make life better for my residents, for me and for my coworkers.

For my residents, not enough staff means not enough time to push wheelchairs into the lobby. It means no time to take residents outside on a beautiful summer day. It means that residents who want to play Bingo, but need someone by their side to help them with the card can't play. If we work really hard and rush from one resident to another, we may get the bare necessities done, but there's no time for the other things that make the difference between living their lives or just existing.

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More time to talk to residents and interact with them also means better care. It means we can listen to what's bothering them and maybe help find a solution. It means we don't have to rush off to the next person before we've had time for that extra five minutes of that can make the difference between treating people like human beings and treating them like they're on an assembly line.

It also means a better quality of life for me and my co-workers. When you rush from one patient to another and you know you're not giving them all the time and attention they need, it's very stressful. Many days I can't take a break or even eat my lunch. We go home tired, stressed out, and burnt out and fall asleep at the dinner table before we can talk to our kids. We go into healthcare because we care about people but we find ourselves with no time to care.

Please pass this bill, so we can give our families and our residents the love and attention they need and deserve. Thank you.