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Testimony in Support of HB 6486: the Establishment of a Quality PCA Workforce Council

To Representative Tercyak, Senator Musto and members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Renae Reese and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Center for a New Economy. I am writing testimony in support of HB 6486

The CT Center for New Economy is a non-profit organization that works to improve the lives of working families across CT. Personal Care Attendants receive public funding to help people with disabilities and seniors live in their home and community with dignity, respect, and independence. Their important work warrants more than the poverty wages we pay them.

The poverty wages and lack of benefits have a very negative impact on the work force and the families who rely of their assistance to live independently. Personal care attendants who love this work and love providing quality care often leave this job for a job that will provide better pay and benefits. The high turnover leads to a shortage of caregivers and leaves consumers without the quality care they need to live in their home and community.

Recently, my elderly next door neighbor, struggling with dementia, needed assistance to stay in her home. It had become increasingly difficult to keep her safe, but she was still able to perform most of the activities of daily living and benefitted greatly by staying in her familiar environment. I spoke with some of the young women, and there were many over a short time, who showed up at her door, asking if they had back-up. I worried about their safety as well as that of my dear neighbor. It occurred to me that no one should be working in a private home without training, but especially not without support.

The Quality Workforce Council will help folks like my neighbor who can live independently longer because they have access to a network of individuals who are trained and supported. Families can have a voice in helping shape polices that most affect them and their workers. A council can help families match caregivers to their needs and help improve the workforce by recruiting new caregivers, recommending training opportunities and reducing turnover through improved wages and benefits.

Please vote in support of HB 6486. By supporting the workforce council, you are taking the necessary steps to make sure that your neighbors, community, and family members have access to quality care at home.

Thank you.