Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Chelsea Daniels and I have been a licensed practical nurse (LPN) at Freshriver Health Care for 7 years. I regularly work the 3pm to 11pm shift, also known as second shift. I am here today to ask for increased Medicaid funding for Nursing Home employees like me.

On a daily basis I work with twenty-five to thirty patients. I make sure that their evening goes well, that their meds are given to them in a timely way, and that their evening care allows the residents to have a great night. These days, many of the residents I work with at Freshriver have behavioral health issues and are suffering from addiction. Residents who are dealing with behavior health issues are challenging especially without the adequate resources for training and staffing. Having enough staff is vital to making sure that everyone is given the time and energy to make sure their quality of care is of the highest level. Without enough staff we typically take on additional burdens and work at a pace that is unhealthy for us as caregivers. And while our pace has increased, our pay has remained stagnant, and in some cases, management has refused to provide additional resources for things like retirement security and health benefits. This is not right.

Recently, I was charting in the medical records at a nurses station at 4am and a resident who was younger and more aggressive broke through a gate at the nurse’s station and assaulted me. I was able to call for help and eventually get the resident to redirect his behavior, but these types of incidents are becoming more common with each passing day. Without adequate resources from the state to pay for training and staffing in the nursing home, we as caregivers are left to ourselves. I have been advocating for advanced training and have been leading a fight with my union to try and bring higher quality behavioral health training to myself and my co-workers, but we can’t make progress without resources from the state to make it happen.

Increased funding for things like more staff on the floor would provide more focused individualized care that could drastically improve the outcomes of the residents at Freshriver and nursing homes throughout the state. It would also provide a safer place for both staff and residents alike. I love my residents. It is hard to see them struggle with their addictions and medical issues. My co-workers and I are reaching a critical point. If the state cannot offer more resources for things like staffing, training, wages and benefits, we are prepared to strike to protect our clients. We know what quality care looks like, and we are prepared to fight to defend the lives of both the residents and caregivers like us.

Thank you for your time today.