Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Refila Walters and I am a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA). I have worked at Maple View Rehab in Rocky Hill for the past 35 years.

Short staffing at Maple View Rehab results in a reduced quality of care, a stressful work environment, and high employee burnout. On paper the staffing may appear sufficient, but all it takes is one person to call out sick and we’re immediately understaffed. When you’re working a shift without proper staffing you become exhausted and it becomes very difficult to provide the type of quality care that you would like to.

Even on days where we are staffed up to the current industry standards, we are still dealing with ratios that are ten to one. On days where we are under staffed, the ratios can get up to thirteen to one or worse. When working with this many patients it is very difficult to do our jobs and creates a recipe for disaster.

In addition to insufficient staffing levels, low wages and poor benefits makes it difficult to attract talented professionals to fill the positions we badly need filled. Without a living wage, I am living paycheck to paycheck and am constantly dealing with financial strains while also baring the stress of work. I am burnt out and I can see it in my coworkers that they are as well. I love the work I do because I see the positive impact I see on the lives of the people I care for; but without a living wage I’ve often thought about finding work elsewhere.

The only solution to this issue is to properly fund the services we provide. With additional funding we can solve the staffing crisis ensuring that the care we provide is quality; we can attract and retain talented caregivers to do this vital work; and we can give the caregivers working in this industry as well as the people they care for a dignified way of life.

Thank you for your time.