Good evening members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Antoinette Osei-Bonsu. I am a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) employed at Freshriver Healthcare in Windsor, Connecticut. I am here today to testify in support of an increase in Medicaid funding.

I have been employed as a CNA for the past 24 years at Freshriver Healthcare. My job consists of working the 3pm-11pm shift, otherwise known as second shift. On my shift I care for residents suffering from Dementia and Alzheimer’s. These residents are long term care residents. They are individuals who must live at the Center, have their basic needs attended to and need 24 hour observation for safety. Many of these residents were once cared for at home either by family members and or home care workers until it became necessary to have 24 hour observation for safety and round the clock care due to their limited physical capability.

I enjoy working with the elderly and am always looking for solutions to make our residents lives better. I currently take care of 10 residents on my shift unless there are call outs or scheduling issues. I am very lucky that I am good at multitasking and knowing what to prioritize at work and get the job done. My work is non-stop for eight hours and I am always on the go.

Policy makers need to consider that an increase to Medicaid funding is a necessity in order to create staffing levels appropriate for our Connecticut residents living in long term care facilities. Everyone wants their loved ones to have good care. Everyone wants their loved ones to have someone to rely on for emotional support while their family member cannot be there.

In 2015 the State of Connecticut added monies into the budget for long term care workers to get additional benefits and wages. That was greatly appreciated but since 2015, wages have remained unchanged. Workers are finding themselves working much harder for the same level of pay. More and more workers are exiting the field because the job has become too demanding with the acuity levels of the residents and less staff to care for them. Workers are facing burnout.

Enough is enough. My co-workers and I are prepared to strike to defend our residents care and defend good quality nursing home jobs. We have been in negotiations for 2 years and have not been able to reach an agreement nor increase staffing levels. We need the help of our lawmakers in the State of Connecticut.