



SEIUHealthcare.
United for Quality Care

February 14, 2019
Michelle Hart, Personal Care Attendant
Before the Committee on Labor and
Public Employees

In Support of SB 1 and HB 5003 (RAISED), AN ACT CONCERNING PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE and AN ACT IMPLEMENTING A PAID FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE PROGRAM

Good Morning Chairs Kushner and Porter and members of the Committee on Labor and Public Employees, my name is Michelle Hart and I'm a homecare worker from Baltic. I got into homecare after taking care of my grandmother, who had Alzheimer's and Dementia, fulfilling a promise I made to my grandfather to keep her at home under my care. With the experience I had, I've decided this is something I was put on this earth to continue to do. I provide loving and attentive care for others even when facing challenges. Everyone who knows me, knows that through it all I always have a smile on my face and a positive attitude.

Many of the challenges that I've faced were when paid and family leave wasn't available to me in my time of need which took a huge toll on me physically, financially and emotionally. The first time was when I sustained an injury that caused my lung to collapse. Because I didn't have paid leave I had to undergo surgery to have my lung glued back to my chest wall and then went back to work the very next day. I worked through the pain for a long time because I had no other choice since I needed to earn money to support my family.

The last time I really needed paid leave and didn't have it was just last fall, when a disk in my back broke in half as a result of lifting a client. At that time, we as homecare workers didn't have access to workers comp insurance, either. I could barely walk or drive but I pushed myself to do it anyways because I had to keep working to avoid eviction. I received several cortisone shots and finally underwent surgery to begin to walk again without pain.

Today, I'm thankful that through my Union we won workers comp insurance that finally went into effect in January, so no one will ever go without care after being injured on the job. I'm also a proud mom of 4 kids that I introduced to activism because I feel it's important to show your children what's at stake and what's worth fighting for. I currently care for three different homecare clients to make a full time living, and I love what I do. We've made a lot of progress with our union over the years, but tens of thousands of working families like mine still need true paid medical and family leave. No one should have to choose between working to stay afloat and seeing yourself or a loved one through a crisis. We should be able to care for our own health and that of our loved ones without facing the stress of losing our income.

Thank you for your time.