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1199NE Connecticut

February 25, 2019
Gloria Plummer, Certified Nursing Assistant,
SEIU District 1199 New England
Before the Public Health Committee

In Support of Proposed Senate Bill 375 - **AN ACT CONCERNING NURSING HOME STAFFING LEVELS**

Good Afternoon Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg and members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Gloria Plummer and I have been a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) for twenty-four (24) years. I currently work at Wintonbury Care Center. I'm here today to ask you to support Senate Bill 375 and to tell you firsthand what working in a nursing home is like and how lack of proper funding is impacting caregivers and the residents we care so deeply about.

In order to do our jobs to the best of our ability, we need proper staffing. The work we do as caregivers makes a meaningful difference in our residents' lives. They need the care that we provide, they depend on it to function. We are constantly understaffed and over-worked. We do what we can to provide the best care we can to our residents but lack of resources causes us to work so hard that many days I barely have time for a break.

Having worked in the nursing home field for over twenty years I have seen how the residents we care for have changed. Their needs are greater, they have more illnesses than residents in the past and the burden on nursing home workers has increased. I used to work with the elderly, but now I work with residents who have very serious mental illnesses. I work with residents who suffer from dementia, addiction, bipolar, bad behavior and other mental illnesses. Some of the care I give isn't as physically intense as before, but it is much more emotionally and mentally draining. For instance, sometimes I have to break up fights, or remind my suicidal residents that they matter. I even had to learn how to do restraints on combative residents.

These residents aren't bed ridden, they roam so much that some nursing homes have to have locked units. These residents are frequently people in their 50's who are mentally unstable. Others have behavioral issues – they steal things or will walk out naked without clothes. This is important work and these residents depend on our care.

If we had a sufficient number of staff it would generate better care. We wouldn't have to rush and we would have time to socialize with the residents. I remember once a resident asked if I was mad at her because I never had time to sit down with her anymore. There's never enough time to give them what they deserve. It's little things like conversation, contact and attention that is what care is all about. Things like having their hair and make-up done. They shouldn't be deprived of that right.

Residents and family deserve to know when we are short on staff. They need to know that the state is paying attention to the number of caregivers. They know when there isn't enough staff on the floor because they can't find anyone to assist them with their needs. Residents deserve to know if they are going to be able to get the care they deserve, or if they'll be able to get in bed on time, get their meals on time, or to get a bath. These residents are our mothers, fathers, some were lawyers, doctors, nurses, veterans- they have contributed a lot to this country – they stood up for us in life and now it's time we stand up for them. Please pass Senate Bill 375. Thank you for your time.