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Cheryl Fortson, Consumer
Bridgeport
SEIU District 1199 New England
Before the Banking Committee

In SUPPORT of HB 5426: AN ACT CONCERNING LIENS FOR UNPAID WAGES AND A REQUIREMENT THAT FISCAL INTERMEDIARIES MEET EMPLOYER TIMELY PAY OBLIGATIONS

Good Morning Senator Kasser, Representative Lopes and members of the Committee, my name is Cheryl Fortson and I'm a consumer receiving Medicaid-funded homecare services at my home in Bridgeport. I have two PCAs, including my son, Keyme who is here with me today.

After several strokes and two shoulder surgeries, I began receiving homecare services 15 years ago, and got on the Community First Choice program in 2017 after falling down the stairs and fracturing all the bones on the left side of my body. My PCAs come in and help me prepare my breakfast, help me with my shower, put my compression socks on, wash my clothes and make my bed, take me grocery shopping, and whatever else I need to live safely in my own home. As someone who raised 5 kids and cooked my own Thanksgiving dinner for 36 years without fail, staying as independent as possible is very valuable to me. My PCAs make it possible for me to keep my independence as a woman and hold my head up high.

Ever since being with Allied, we've had problems. Last week, they called on Thursday night – the evening before payday – and said they didn't get the timesheets. They said either they didn't receive them or they received them late. I told them they better decide which lie they're going to tell, because it can't be both. Plus, I fax my PCAs timesheets from a dedicated line and my own AND I email a pdf version of their timesheets, so I know they got them on time. I told them: I don't hear do lullabies in the daytime. My son got paid a partial paycheck but is still owed some of his pay.

Not only that, but they're phone bullies. If I ask to speak to someone in payroll, someone will say "You don't know who you need to talk to". They're rude, they act like they're doing me a favor by paying my workers. I'm the consumer!

Listen, I've done payroll, I've worked in an office, so don't treat me like I'm your kid because I'm a full-grown woman. Before I got sick I had a long career spanning from switchboard operator to payroll to being a healthcare provider. I was a CNA and I worked in group homes; I was also a program development director and I have my associate degree in medical administration. When I had my strokes, I was going to school for a mortuary science degree. So after my long career, I know how payroll is supposed to operate, and this isn't it. My granddaughter used to care for me but she quit because she didn't get paid. Not paying my PCAs doesn't just hurt them, it also hurts ME because then I can't get care.

I feel like I have a purpose in sharing my story. I don't feel like the lone ranger anymore. I'm gonna fight for my team because I know if my PCAs are paid I'm going to have a happy team. I'm not asking for a whole lot: right is right and wrong is wrong. I have 17 grandchildren and 1 great-grandchild, and I need to make things right for them. We need your help, as lawmakers, to make things right for us. Please pass HB 5426. Teamwork is dream work. Thank you for your time.