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United for Quality Care

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Keyme Fortson, Personal Care Attendant  
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 Keyme Fortson and I'm a PCA from Bridgeport who cares for my mom. I've always been a caregiver for elderly people in my family and kids – we have a big family – but I began caring for my mom when she became disabled in 2016. Initially, I was told by Community First Choice that my mom was approved for services and I could begin submitting timesheets. But after a month and a half of not getting paid, I called and Allied said I wasn't authorized to work because my mom was on a spend-down for the grand sum of \$2.97. As a result, I worked for free until 2017, when she was actually approved for services. During that same time, our house had caught on fire and it was a total loss so we had moved into a hotel, where we lived for a year, so I REALLY could have used the wages that were initially promised to me.

Once I began to get paid by Allied, the problems were constant. Sometimes Allied would say my mom was back on spend-down and I'd stop getting paid; sometimes Allied would say they didn't receive my timesheets even though I'd sent them BOTH by pdf email and fax; and sometimes Allied would say they "received them but they weren't processed." But the bottom line meant that I wasn't getting paid, even when we'd done everything right.

The constant problems with getting paid means I get overdraft fees, my bills fall behind, and my child support agreement gets put in jeopardy which in turn puts me at risk of incarceration. I have 8 kids and not being able to count on my paycheck creates an extremely stressful situation for my family. I tried to quit 2 or 3 times but it's my mom and she needs the care so I keep coming back.

It's like we're trapped: if I stay in the job but don't get paid, the State says I'm neglecting my kids' child support payments. If I leave the job the State says I'm at risk of abandonment of my mom, not to mention I worry about her. Either way, I can't win. My experience caring for my mom shows that if we had a pay system

that included communication with both consumers and PCAs – about eligibility, about timesheet problems, about ANY issues that can impact payment – we could better survive and thrive as PCAs, as consumer, and as families. We’re calling on you as lawmakers to choose people over profits and make sure we’re paid a living wage – On Time, Every Time. Please pass HB 5426. Thank you for your time.