



**SEIU**Healthcare®  
United for Quality Care

March 11, 2021  
Natasha Cruz, PCA  
Bridgeport  
District 1199NE  
Before the Labor Committee

***In Support of SB 1002: AN ACT CONCERNING LABOR ISSUES RELATED TO COVID-19, PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT AND OTHER STAFFING MATTERS and In Support of HB 6595: AN ACT CONCERNING LABOR MATTERS RELATED TO COVID-19, PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT AND OTHER STAFFING ISSUES***

Good Morning Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and members of the Committee, my name is Natasha Cruz from Bridgeport, and I've been a Personal Care Attendant for nearly 10 years. I've cared for at least 6 different Consumers who have physical disabilities or who are elderly who need support to live independently. I like that homecare is a 1-on-1 setting and I've become close with my current Consumer, who is sadly now hospitalized with COVID-19. I am here today to testify in support of Senate Bill 1002 and House Bill 6595.

Providing support to my Consumer is a very physical job, but the job is mentally challenging too. She is a stroke survivor and that brings some behavioral challenges, for example. Also, knowing that I'm a single parent of two daughters without paid sick time really weighs on me.

Last month, one of my coworkers fell sick. She couldn't take more than a couple days off, and quickly came back to work even though she was still sick. Around the same time, both my consumer and her husband also tested positive for COVID-19. Not going to work was not an option; my consumer is bed-bound and relies on her PCAs. I could not leave her to fend for herself; she can't even go to the bathroom without assistance. I went to work, wore my cloth mask and gloves, but had no other PPE provided to care for her. I wasn't so worried about myself being exposed, but I was worried about my girls. If I get sick, I won't be my full self to care for my daughters, and on top of that I'd still take a hit by calling out of work because we don't have any paid time off.

I don't blame my coworker because she had no good choices, just like I have no good choices if I get sick. We should not have to choose between a paycheck to support our families, and staying home when we're sick to protect ourselves and our consumers. In this case, the entire household was put at risk because we do not have paid time off, and that's not right.

Please support Senate Bill 1002 and House Bill 6595 that would provide hazard pay and a paid sick leave relief fund for PCAs like me. I hope that my consumer will be home from the hospital soon so I can continue working for her, but I deserve the reassurance of knowing I shouldn't have to choose between my livelihood and the health of myself or my daughters. Thank you.