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United for Quality Care

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Jordan Deangelo, PCA  
Winstead  
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 afternoon Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, and members of the committee. My name is Jordan DeAngelo. I am a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) living and working in Winstead, CT, and I care for my mother.

Caring for others has always been a part of my life. As a teenager I cared for my grandmother, and so when it became obvious that my mother would benefit from a personal care attendant I stepped up. I enjoy caring for my mom. It makes me happy to know I am able to allow her to continue living in her home and do so comfortably. That said, the fact that I am caring for my mother doesn't make it any easier. In fact, it is even harder because there is an emotional tax to watching a loved one struggle, and even though I am only paid for 40 hours a week, I am essentially working 24/7 to care for my mom.

Home care workers in Connecticut are professional caregivers. The work we do allows people to receive critical care while remaining in their own homes. We don't just clean their homes or help them in and out of bed, we help them socialize and continue to do the things they love. We care about our consumers; they are human beings and deserve to live normal lives. It saddens me deeply that we work so hard to provide a dignified life for our consumers, yet we are treated with utter disregard by the society we live in.

When the pandemic hit in March of last year, PCA's were left without PPE by the State. With our union we had to fight tooth and nail to even get the state to recognize that we deserved to get PPE and enough PPE when we needed it. Even then, they would not listen to PCAs and instead only allowed Consumers to request PPE. And there were still problems with delivery! Consumers were left waiting in the cold for PPE delivery; Some packages came with 1 glove and 50 masks; Some with 1 masks and 37 gloves; and even some still had 2 pairs of gloves and five masks to last for two weeks of care from 4 PCA's. Does that make any sense?

Unlike people in other professions, however, we do not receive health insurance or paid sick leave through our jobs. This became incredibly problematic when COVID hit because not only were PCA's living paycheck to paycheck on already low wages and having to buy their own PPE in many cases, but then if Consumers or PCA's got sick, there was no sick leave for us to access so we didn't have to go to work if either us or our consumers got sick. I have known PCAs to leave the profession entirely, even if it means a pay cut, to take a job that provides health insurance.

This high turnover among PCAs due to low wages and lack of health insurance also means disruption of care for the clients. They are left to having to find new PCA's, train them, and build trust and rapport. Imagine having that kind of a crisis during the COVID pandemic. PCA's are like family to consumers, or in cases like mine, we literally are family.

Both PCAs and the consumers we care for deserve better. Please support Senate Bill 1002 and House Bill 6595 so that PCA's like can receive sick leave, hazard pay and receive the benefits we deserve. Thank you for your time.