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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 Dana Havens and I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 1002 and House Bill 6595 because I have firsthand experience of how COVID 19 can affect you long after the commonly believed 10-14 days.

My covid test results came back on November 24th. I was unable to return to work until February 17th and I am still experiencing some of the symptoms to this day all be it much less. Thankfully my neurologist assures me they will all go away with time. How long is not really known.

I work in a group home for the developmentally disabled. Our residents are on the profound scale and have behavioral challenges as well. Due to both of these issues getting them to wear a mask at all is not possible for some and only tolerated in short bursts for others. For example, if a client has pica issues, wearing a mask would be dangerous to them if they attempt to swallow it.

COVID struck our facility very hard. All but 3 of our staff were infected as well as the majority of our residents. I was the last staff to become infected as of this date. We were, obviously, running short staffed at the time so I was so busy I was unable to even check my weekly test results until just as I was leaving at 9pm. I should also note that I actually should have been off duty at 9:30 AM that day. However, another staff tested positive a day or so earlier and lack of available staff to fill in meant I was mandated to stay as there was no one available to relieve me. This type of mandation had been going on for several weeks. That was November 25th, the day before Thanksgiving.

You might be thinking I must not have had any symptoms if I was going to work every day and working all those extra hours. You'd be partially correct, I didn't have a fever and I was still able to taste and smell, however I did have body aches, exhaustion and a cough. I didn't think twice about any of those symptoms, I have a mold allergy and fall is a bad time for that, so my cough I was attributing to my usual asthmatic response to the mold, the body aches and exhaustion were explained away by the 14-16+ hours a day I was mandated to work as opposed to my regular part time schedule.

That cough progressed to the point that I needed to use a nebulizer, a steroid inhaler, a rescue inhaler and an oral steroids all for over a month. While all the breathing issues were going on I

noticed weakness and numbness in my legs but attributed it to feeling so weak from the virus, however as my lungs began to clear I noticed my legs were actually getting worse.

Here's one thing that many of us don't or didn't realize, although COVID 19 is referred to as a respiratory illness, it has a neurological component, which is why many people who contract it lose their sense of taste or smell or both. Some, like myself, suffer other neurological symptoms.

Mine progressed to the point that I was unable to walk safely unassisted. I had very little feeling in my legs from below my knees down to my toes. When I would walk it felt like I was walking with sponges strapped on my feet and I was trying to walk on quicksand and my ankles, well sometimes they just seemed to disappear.

Due to this symptom and the nature of my job I was unable to return to work until February 17th. I am still experiencing numbness but it is much better than before. Now I'm dealing with pain in my hips due to the waddle that is now my gait. However that will go away when feeling fully returns and I can again walk heel to toe.

I did get paid for 2 weeks via the COVID 19 relief bill. However I had to take the hit for the remainder of my illness.

This is a burden that I and others in my field should not have to bare. I am confident too that I contracted it at work due to the afore mentioned mandatory hours coupled with not being able to even have a day off. All I did was work, go home to isolate in my bedroom, and sleep. Workers like me should be compensated for the risks that we take to do this job, and we also shouldn't have to suffer or take from our sick leave when we get sick from COVID at work. There is no doubt that we got sick at work, and we should be provided worker's compensation when we do get sick. Please pass Senate Bill 1002 and House Bill 6595 and Worker's Compensation presumption. Thank you for your time.