



**SEIU**Healthcare®  
United for Quality Care

February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
Audrey Patterson, Program Aide  
Whole Life  
SEIU 1199NE  
Before the Labor And  
Public Employees 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 Labor and Public Employees committee. My name is Audrey Patterson and I live in Vernon, CT. I have been a Program Aide at Whole Life for 31 years, and I have worked in a similar position at Network for almost 11 years now. I am here today to testify in support of SB 1002 and HB 6595.

At Whole Life and Network, I work with people with mental and physical disabilities. I enjoy my work because I make a difference in other people's lives. I have developed very close relationships with the individuals I care for and I really enjoy working with them to develop life skills and help them live quality lives.

This year, my work became much harder. The pandemic put a whole other face on the risk that essential workers like me are taking. We have never had the privilege to stay home for work. The population of people that depend on us will continue to depend on us. So, for essential workers who are putting our lives and our family lives on the line, it has been insulting not to receive adequate hazard pay and COVID leave.

At the height of the pandemic, we were only offered an additional \$2 an hour. However, we only get hazard pay if we have a confirmed case within the house, and even then this additional pay will be ending in the next few months. This is simply not enough money for the risk we are assuming.

I would know, I contracted COVID at the start of the pandemic and with my pre-existing autoimmune diseases I was struck with instant fear. I luckily came out of the ordeal from the other side well but I did have to use my own time to quarantine after my time bank was used up. I know of co-workers who have had to use all of their accrued time during this ordeal, and then what are they supposed to live off of if they can't work? When we're only paid an additional \$2 an hour "Hazard" pay, it doesn't actually really help us when "Hazard" strikes.

That is why these bills are so important. Frontline healthcare workers like me deserve to be taken care of just as we take care of our clients. Please pass SB 1002 and HB 6595.

Thank you for your time.