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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 Astrid Tavares. I am a dental assistant and I work for the Department of Corrections. I am here today to testify in support of Senate Bill 1002 and House Bill 6595.

I absolutely love my job! Nothing brings me more joy than helping bring a smile to others. I've worked in many different settings and work environments, but this one has definitely been the most challenging. We have so many patients with so many dental needs and there are only two of us treating close to 100 patients. We do the best we can to help prioritize and treat patients on an individual basis. Although I work in corrections and many have been arrested for serious crimes, I never let that get in the way of providing them with excellent oral care. Dental issues can cause excruciating pain that affects your quality of life. I try my best to help improve all my patients' oral health so that they can focus solely on their rehabilitation.

When COVID hit, it really impacted me in a way I'll never forget. It forced me to think about choosing between the well-being of my patients and the well-being of my family. The emotional toll it took on me and many of my coworkers is something I cannot explain. Although I was an expectant mother and considered high risk, it never crossed my mind to leave my job. I knew there were needs to be met and we had to stick together to overcome this unprecedented pandemic. It was heartbreaking to see all of the sleep-deprived nurses overwhelmed with patients. The fear on their faces was obvious. Many of them had to take drastic measures to protect their families from sickness by changing their daily routine, undressing in the garage before entering their homes, and some even stayed at nearby hotels. They sacrificed by being away from their families in efforts to protect their children or immunocompromised love ones. We all feared for our families, but we

also understood there were needs to be met. Anytime I could, I helped relieve some of the nurses' stress by taking vital signs, sterilizing or disinfecting surfaces, and sharing my PPEs. I was happy to do so without hesitation. Compared to what they had to do, my contribution to their efforts seemed insufficient.

No one understands what frontline and essential workers like me have had to go through in the past year. We are called heroes over and over, but we are never compensated for the risks we have taken. And it wasn't just us taking the risks, it was our families too. Please pass Senate Bill 1002 and House Bill 6595 and give heroes pay to workers like me. Thank you for your time.