



SEIUHealthcare
United for Quality Care

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Before the Public Health Committee

In Support of SB 1030 AN ACT CONCERNING LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES With Changes.

Good afternoon Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Tanya Beckford, I live in Manchester, CT, and I have worked as the Newington Rapid Recovery Rehab Center as a CNA for 24 years.

I love the work I do as a CNA, because of the bonds I am able to form with my residents. I love seeing their faces brighten up when I walk into their rooms. Many of my residents are battling Alzheimer's or dementia, and so they may not always remember my name but they know I am a friend.

I really do love my job, but I am so sick and tired of hearing the word "Heroes" being thrown around for front line employees and essential workers; especially when it's being used to describe workers in nursing homes, hospitals, and other healthcare settings. We have been disrespected throughout this entire pandemic. The disrespect took many forms. We had PPE hidden from us, we were chronically understaffed and overworked, and we were paid poverty wages throughout it all.

During the pandemic, we were in desperate need of PPE so that we could safely care for our residents. Instead of doing what was necessary to provide staff with PPE, nursing home operators chose to ration PPE. Some of my co-workers even began wearing trash bags because we didn't have enough gowns. It was not only the nursing home operators who are to blame for this. When asked about workers using trash bags, Barbara Cass, the Chief of Health Care Quality and Safety at DPH, said we prefer to wear trash bags. This level of disrespect is disgusting to say the least.

In addition to a lack of PPE, there was a chronic shortage of staffing that existed before the pandemic but worsened during it. Staff were run ragged trying to provide care for our residents. While we do love our work, it is exhausting work and when there aren't enough caregivers working a shift, the quality of care suffers. This isn't fair to the caregivers or the residents.

It is hard to address staffing because it is hard to find people who want to do this work with the wages we earn. We put our lives and our families' lives on the line working during a pandemic, but you wouldn't know it looking at how much we are paid. Why would someone want to come into a nursing home and work hard for just \$14 an hour, when they could go to McDonald's or Wendy's, for the same amount of pay, but less of the stress and risk?

I support SB 1030 because it seeks to address some of these issues. This bill would require nursing homes to keep a 3 month stockpile of PPE at all times, which is a good first step but it should be a 6 month stockpile. This bill would address low staffing by raising standards for

ratios, which will improve the quality of care we can provide our residents. While there is nothing in this bill to address low wages, I believe these two proposals will make a positive impact on the nursing home field. Please pass SB 1030.

Thank you for your time.