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St John Paul

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 Maribel Sanchez and I am a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) at the St John Paul nursing home in Danbury, Connecticut. I have worked there for 3 years. I come before you today to testify in support of SB 1030 with changes.

I have always been a caregiver, and love the work I do. Before moving to the United States ten years ago, I was a nurse in the Dominican Republic. After moving to the United States it made sense to pursue a career in healthcare. My mom was in a nursing home for a time before she passed, and so when I'm caring for my residents, I view them as my mother, father, brother, or sister. During COVID residents couldn't see their family and so we were their family. You can't do this job for the money because the pay is not good, you can only do this job if you care about your residents.

As a CNA, I feed people, help people with their hygiene, and all around take care of people. Finding the time to attend to all the needs of residents can be very challenging with short staffing. It is not uncommon to have one CNA caring for over 35 residents, specifically during first shift. While staffing has always been problematic, it became much worse during COVID. A lot of people quit out of fear of getting the virus. Without more staff to fill shifts, my coworkers and I were working over 50 hours a week.

It is very hard to give quality care when we are short staffed. Finding time to do anything was hard. Even finding the time to sit with a COVID positive resident as they passed away meant potentially falling behind on your work. We are supposed to get two 15 minute shifts but often can't take one break let alone two.

At the height of the pandemic we also suffered from a lack of PPE. My facility did not have enough PPE stockpiled and so we were forced to reuse PPE, even though it was designed for single use. This made my coworkers and I feel like saving money on PPE was more important than our own lives. This is unacceptable.

Another major issue in nursing homes that was amplified by the pandemic is the lack of adequate training staff receive. What little training we received for infection control was

largely inadequate. Not only was the scope of the training limited, but the training and its materials were not offered in any language other than English. As a bilingual woman I was shocked more effort wasn't put in to ensure our staff were trained efficiently. We are a diverse staff caring for a diverse population.

I am supporting SB 1030, because I believe it would address these issues. This bill would improve staffing standards, which will reduce stress and burnout amongst staff. This bill would also require nursing homes to stockpile 3 months of PPE. I think this is a good proposal, but it could be strengthened by making it 6 months. Finally, this bill would set standards for infection control education and training. This is so important and should include a bilingual component.

For the sake of nursing home workers and residents across the state, please pass SB 1030.

Thank you for your time.