



Good Morning Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Laura Kamm and I have been working with people with special needs for over two decades. I currently work for Sunrise Northeast, and I have been with the company for over 18 years. At my job, I care for individuals who have difficulty caring for themselves. I love my job and people who live at my group home. We go on trips, on outings, I take care of them when they are sick, and I am there for all their happy moments. I love it.

Despite my dedication to them, I, and my fellow coworkers for Sunrise, have reached a breaking point. Since the state has not increased the budget, Sunrise workers like myself are stuck barely keeping our heads above water. I have not had health insurance for over 3 years. On the wages I make, I cannot even afford basic care out-of-pocket, such as check-ups or preemptive tests. See, at Sunrise, our health insurance costs more than most employees make in a month. For individuals, it is more than \$800 a month. For families, it is over \$1,000. This frightens me because as I have gotten older, I have watched friends pass away from diseases and illnesses. They all struggled with health insurance coverage. I fear having to go through the same for myself or my family. I have seen what it is like when you cannot go to the hospital because you are broke with no insurance.

I am a single parent, with one income. A few years ago, my daughter fell ill. She had a stroke, and I had to take care of her. Neither of us had health insurance. I had to put her on state health insurance just to get her care, even though I work full time and should have been able to provide her with the coverage she needed. It was frustrating as a parent, because I could not help my own child. I take care of people for a living. I deserve to be able to take care of my own family.

Additionally, with the wages I make, I was not able to afford to keep the heat on at my house this winter. I had to get help from public heating assistance in order to be able to heat my home. It caused me a lot of stress and anxiety. I pick up so many hours. Why can't I afford the basics like health insurance and heating at my house?

I give 150% to my work. It is crazy that I cannot afford health insurance. It is crazy that, when my child had a stroke, I was not able to provide her with coverage. It is crazy that I cannot afford heating in my own house. I work hard. I work full-time. I deserve better. Please fund services so that workers like me can take care of their families, and deliver the quality care that we know our clients deserve.