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Melody Davis, Mental Health Associate
River Valley Services
SEIU District 1199 New England
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, Hello. My name is Melody Davis. I am a Mental Health Associate at River Valley Services.

In my capacity as a Mental Health Associate, I play a major role in the day to day work. Mental Health Associates are responsible for helping to ensure that everyone on my unit is able to provide quality services to the people we serve. We filter information between Nursing Supervisors, helping Mental Health Assistants do their work effectively. We hear about problems, and work with the staff to fix them.

I will soon be retiring, and am concerned that the Department of Administrative Services has red circled this job title. This will mean that experienced coworkers will not have a way to advance. It is important that this is changed. I work with a group of very skilled Mental Health Assistants. When I leave, someone with years of experience as an MHA should be able to move up to become a Mental Health Associate.

Without the ability to promote, we are doing a disservice to patients, because we are struggling to recruit and retain talented workers that have the credentials and the drive to do the work. Without a pension and benefits to attract workers like me to the State sector, we are seeing more people hired on the outside where they can earn more. The State has a responsibility to our residents to provide access to these services. If we cannot hire and retain workers, we are facing a huge crisis.

Please fund and expand mental health services so that we are delivering MORE quality health care in Connecticut, and please help us attract and keep more workers that can and want to do this work.

Thank you for your time.