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United for Quality Care

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Charmayne Brown, DSP
Sunrise
SEIU 1199NE
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Charmayne Brown and I am a Direct Support Professional (DSP) with Sunrise at the Verwood Group home in Hartford. I am here today to testify in support of an increase in Medicaid funding for group home workers like me.

I have been employed with Sunrise for 13 years. I love the work that I do because I love taking care of people. Most importantly I enjoy taking care of my individuals and having them become like family to me. I work Monday thru Friday on the first shift. As much as I love what I do there are definitely things that are not okay that go on with Sunrise. My coworkers do not feel appreciated by the company and they make us feel like they just don't care. Staffing in a good amount of our houses is not adequate at all to the point where I myself have bounced around and picked up extra hours just to help out my coworkers and give our individuals the support that they need.

Sunrise employs has thousands of employees, but you can count on one hand how many of those employees actually take the insurance through the company. The reason for this is because the insurance is nowhere near affordable. The family plan offered by Sunrise for instance is \$5,200 a month. This is more than I make in a month. Sunrise claims to be the highest paid company, but yet they don't pay their employees enough to even survive on a daily basis.

Elected officials like you can help workers like me. A raise in Medicaid funds would mean so much to me because it would mean a raise in wages and affordable benefits. As a mother I would be able to provide my son with so much more without always trying to figure out what bill is more important. I could provide my son and myself with much better health insurance. And on the whole if I had an extra boost in income it would help me to be able to pay my bills and still have something left over.