



SEIUHealthcare®
United for Quality Care

March 2, 2021
Candice Carlson
Caseworker, DDS
District 1199NE

Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Candice Carlson and I have been employed by DDS as a caseworker in the Individual Home Supports Program for over 27 years. I am testifying and advocating today on behalf of our voiceless individuals statewide that do not have the ability and/or the means to advocate for themselves. I am also here to ask that you help support and fund the Department of Developmental Services by expanding respite services within DDS that are so desperately needed to help provide essential services for individuals with IDD & their families.

I'd also like to speak to the need to staff agencies like DDS and DMHAS. These agencies are consistently underfunded and understaffed in an effort to save money. The Covid pandemic has exposed and exacerbated this systematic pattern of unsafe staffing levels statewide throughout all agencies. The combination of unsafe staffing and lack of quality resources during Covid has cost individuals and employees their lives. That is very concerning. Our CT residents who have intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities and mental illnesses and their families deserve better. The state's direct care workers deserve better.

This insatiable cycle has to change and each one of you can help. Each & everyone one of you can demand that our most vulnerable statewide are provided with the highest quality of care.

Respite services are much needed throughout the state to help provide essential services for individuals with IDD & their families.

Once again, I respectfully ask this committee to help support and fund our CT State agencies that are designed to help our most needy state wide, specifically expanding the Respite services within DDS and helping to fund our agencies to the levels that are needed to staff them adequately.

I also ask this committee to ensure that CT agencies are held accountable in a measurable way for true transparency. Thank you for all that you do and thank you for your consideration.