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SEIU 1199NE
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Wendy Marcoux, I live in South Windsor, and I am a Direct Support Professional with Whole Life. I am here today to talk about the need to fund private providers in the DDS because workers like me need higher wages and benefits we can actually afford.

Caring for people has always been a passion of mine. I first began working with children, but eventually moved to working with adults. Within my position at Whole Life I care for people with mental and physical disabilities. I help them learn new skills that they can use in their everyday lives. Through this work you develop bonds with the individuals you care for, and it is fulfilling to see them do well and to know you helped them.

While I enjoy the work I do at Whole Life, I feel disrespected whenever I attempt to utilize our health insurance plan. The monthly premiums are manageable, but, the deductible is backbreaking. For individual plans the deductible is \$3,500, which means that unless I am in need of a serious procedure I must pay out of pocket. Furthermore, I make too much money to qualify for Husky, so unless I want to be uninsured I am stuck with this plan.

The wage I earn is considered too rich for Husky when I often have to make choices between paying my bills and buying groceries. A raise would give me more financial security, and give me the ability to afford my bills and put food on the table. I am not paid enough to keep up with the typical expenses of life. For instance, when CT was ravaged by tropical storms this past year I had to take out a loan to fix my home. That has put me back. How am I supposed to live off nothing in the middle of a pandemic?

Working as a Direct Support Professional I am tasked on a daily basis with caring for others, but I live in constant fear that something will happen to me and there will be no one to care for me. When you board a plane you are told that in the case of an emergency you should take care of yourself first before you care for others. How can we expect professional care givers to continue serving their communities, when we do next to nothing to ensure they can care for themselves?

Please do the right thing and fund our services, so care givers like me can earn a wage and have benefits that allow us to do our jobs with the peace of mind and the support we need. Thank you for your time.