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United for Quality Care

March 2nd, 2021
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SEIU 1199NE
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee. My name is Jessica Watson and I live in Waterford, Connecticut. I am an Assistant Program Coordinator at Journey Found and have worked here for over three years. I come before you today to ask that you provide group homes the funding increase they desperately need.

I love the work I do at Journey Found. I enjoy the ability to build relationships with our clients, and find it incredibly rewarding knowing my work improves the quality of their lives. As an Assistant Program Coordinator I am responsibly for many administrative tasks, however, I also provide a great deal of direct care.

I work in a residential care home, complete with in home senior support services. We care for three individuals in my home, and have at least one caregiver on each shift. While we are able to staff each shift we work a lot of overtime. I am averaging 60 hours of work a week, which makes it difficult to find time to take care of myself when I'm not working. For instance, I need to see a doctor for a checkup, but I would have to take time off from work to do so, which could compromise our staffing for that day. When you care for the clients you care for, it can be incredibly challenging to care for yourself.

Missing work for personal reasons also becomes very difficult when missing one day's pay can send you into financial crisis. With the amount of OT I am working I am able to just make ends meet. If I did not work as much as I currently do I would not be able to pay my bills. I even considered getting a second job to supplement my pay, however, my schedule is so hectic and unpredictable that it would be nearly impossible to make a second job work. This leaves me in a position where I am in a constant struggle to get by. I try not to think about how bad the pay is because I know I have to do it to survive. I have no other choice.

With a funding increase for group homes, it would become possible to pay group home workers a living wage. A wage increase would mean I wouldn't have to be stressing about getting OT every week just to survive. A wage increase would also mean I would be able to see my family more often. A wage increase would allow me to see a doctor and save for the future. A wage increase would mean an al- around improvement on my quality of life.

Please do what is right by group home workers and the people we care for by increasing funding for group homes in the state.

Thank you for your time.