



**SEIU Healthcare**  
United for Quality Care

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Alexis Burns, LPN  
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SEIU District 1199 New England  
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Alexis Burns, I am an LPN Charge Nurse at the Greenwich Woods nursing home in Greenwich, CT, and I have been working there for 12 years. I come before you today to urge you to increase funding for nursing homes in Connecticut.

I love the work I do because I enjoy building relationships with the residents I care for. We work night and day and my unit is long-term care, so we spend a lot of time with our residents. They become like family to us. In fact, many residents spend more time with us than they do with their own families, especially now that we're in a pandemic.

My responsibilities include doing med rounds, doing narcotic rounds, changing g-tubes, and changing Foley catheters. I always have to start my rounds earlier than the scheduled time to be able to get it all done in the time I have. I also use the Electronic Medical Records (EMR) system to chart psychotic behaviors; everyone under observation needs to be documented. It is an intimidating workload, so I break it down when I am helping onboard new nurses and CNAs. We work hard and it is our goal to provide quality care.

Unfortunately, low staffing makes this very difficult. At night we have 3 nurses and 2 CNAs taking care of over 80 residents. On my unit there are 32 residents between two wings, each covered by one CNA, and sometimes we have heavier residents who we must help move. These residents require 2 or 3 staffers to be turned over, but usually I'm the only other person available, so I have to run back and forth between the two wings to help my CNAs.

Management in my facility will write orders for residents to receive geri-sleeves, floating heels, or other treatments that require specific supplies. However, far too often we are out of the needed supplies, and so the orders are impossible to fill. Sometimes we use pillows to prop residents' legs up in place of floating heels, but even those are in short supply and usually too flat from age and overuse. Sometimes there isn't even enough soap for the residents to wash up. Management has also cut the laundry staff, which creates issue with the direct care staff because laundry becomes backed up. The one person designated to wash the towels is being run ragged trying to keep up with her workload.

Recently staff were encouraged by management to take the Covid-19 vaccine. Management advertised with posters, brought CVS in to administer the injections, and

even paid us for the extra time that we had to stay. But since they hadn't mandated the vaccine, they refused to give us workman's compensation for adverse reactions. I ended up having an adverse reaction to the vaccine, developing Bells Palsy. I suffered pain and partial paralysis in my face, which put me out of work three weeks. I still have pain from it. But my employer refused to help me out and I ended up using all of my vacation time.

The pay we receive is also inadequate and can negatively impact both quality of care and staffing. With the low pay we receive, we are constantly stressed about how we are going to make ends meet. This contributes to staff burn out and increases turn over. Furthermore, our staff members end up having to pick up extra shifts or working 2 or 3 jobs just to make enough to survive. On top of this, we struggle to attract talented care givers, because no one wants to be paid poverty wages to do this incredibly difficult job.

With increased funding we can address the issues of missing supplies, inadequate pay, and low staffing. Please support increasing funding for nursing homes in Connecticut. Nursing home workers like me deserve to be paid and treated better, and our residents deserve the quality care that they are promised.

Thank you for your time.