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United for Quality Care

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Jordan DeAngelo, Home Care
SEIU District 1199 New England
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the committee. My name is Jordan DeAngelo. I am a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) living and working in Winstead, CT, and I care for my mother.

Caring for others has always been a part of my life. As a teenager I cared for my grandmother, and so when it became obvious that my mother would benefit from a personal care attendant I stepped up. I enjoy caring for my mom. It makes me happy to know I am able to allow her to continue living in her home and do so comfortably. That said, the fact that I am caring for my mother doesn't make it any easier. In fact, it is even harder because there is an emotional tax to watching a loved one struggle, and even though I am only paid for 40 hours a week, I am essentially working 24/7 to care for my mom.

Home care workers in Connecticut are professional caregivers. The work we do allows people to receive critical care while remaining in their own homes. We don't just clean their homes or help them in and out of bed, we help them socialize and continue to do the things they love. We care about our consumers; they are human beings and deserve to live normal lives. It saddens me deeply that we work so hard to provide a dignified life for our consumers, yet we are treated with utter disregard by the society we live in.

In my last job as a PCA I cared for three consumers who all lived in the same home. I really cared about these three individuals, but it was incredibly exhausting work, and I was only making \$16.25 an hour to do so. I constantly felt emotionally strained and burned out. We deserve much higher wages for the work that we do. We deserve a pension plan, or at least a 401K. A majority of this workforce are older and will likely be working until they need a PCA themselves.

Unlike people in other professions, however, we do not receive health insurance through our jobs. I make too much money to be eligible for Husky. At 27, I have not had health insurance in almost a decade. I have needed glasses since 2013, but simply cannot afford them. I was born with heart arrhythmia, which means my heart will skip beats. When I was 23, I suffered a heart attack and was taken to the hospital in an ambulance. The ambulance ride was \$1,000 and I am still paying it off to this day. Additionally, the doctor at the hospital urged me to see a cardiologist, but I didn't because I could not afford it. Even routine, preventative measures are out of the question for me. It has been so long since I've been to the dentist that I don't even remember my last cleaning. I have known PCAs to leave the profession entirely, even if it means a pay cut, to take a job that provides health insurance.

This high turnover among PCAs due to low wages and lack of health insurance also means disruption of care for the clients. They are left to having to find new PCA's, train them, and build trust and rapport. The disruption of care is especially difficult for clients who have dementia or

similar conditions since they need consistency. PCA's are like family to consumers, or in cases like mine, we literally are family.

Both PCAs and the consumers we care for deserve better. Please support increased funding for home care services so we can earn the wages and receive the benefits we deserve. Thank you for your time.