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Joan Dyer, CNA  
Regal Care New Haven  
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Joan Dyer, I live in Hamden, CT, and I have been working at the Regal Care New Haven nursing home as a CNA for 20 years. I come before you today to urge you to increase funding for nursing homes in Connecticut.

I enjoy my work as a CNA because I enjoy taking care of my residents. Over the years I have developed great relationships with my residents, and they even ask after me when I'm not working. Unfortunately, residents' families aren't always there and so we become their family. I'm like a daughter, mother, or sister to our residents.

As a CNA, I help residents with showering, hair care, oral hygiene, eating, and socializing. This job is a demanding one, and can be very difficult at times. The inadequate pay we receive makes this even harder. At one point I was working 40 hours a week at the nursing home as well as four days at a second part time job just to get by. When you are working this much it is only natural that you end up burnt out, and when you're burnt out it is hard to put your best foot forward at work. Being paid this little makes you feel undervalued and disrespected.

Last November I lost my father and I was unable to go to his funeral because I contracted COVID while on the job. When I learned I had the virus my whole life changed. At one point I thought I was going to die. There was one night when I could not breathe, and so I called my husband and son to say goodbye. I was very fortunate to survive COVID and I now have a different outlook on life. I do not want to spend every waking hour working just to barely make it. I want to spend my time with my family and loved ones. Unfortunately, for too many nursing home workers working less is simply not an option.

In addition to the wages, low staffing must be addressed. I work on the dementia unit with some of the most demanding residents in our home. One night there were only two CNAs to care for 48 residents with dementia. We had to beg management to help, and I even had to threaten to walk off my shift before they helped. It should never have gotten to that point. The shift should have been staffed appropriately from the start.

With increased funding for nursing homes we could afford to hire more staff in order to staff our homes appropriately, and we would be able to be paid a living wage. This improvement would be life changing for the workers as well as the residents we care for. Please increase funding for nursing homes. Thank you for your time.