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United for Quality Care

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Crystal Harris, PCA
Manchester
SEIU District 1199 New England
Before the Appropriations Committee

My name is Crystal Harris, I live in Manchester, and I've been a PCA for over 10 years. I first got into homecare taking care of my grandmother, who had a stroke. I enrolled in Goodwin college, got med certified, and took the classes I needed. What keeps me in this work is caring for others and the connection I develop with the person I care for.

Currently, I care for an elderly gentleman, bathing, cooking, cleaning, bringing him out into the community, having conversations with him. If not for my care, he wouldn't be able to live independently, which is very important to him.

I have 2 jobs to make ends meet, but I don't receive any benefits through either of them.

I don't have paid sick days, so if I call out, I may not be able to meet my bills. When I was out for 6 weeks for a major surgery, I had to forgo pay and I fell behind in my utility bills and struggled to buy food. Thankfully I don't need major surgery every year, but we need paid sick days to take care of ourselves and protect our consumers from even standard colds and sicknesses.

I don't have retirement savings even though I've been in the workforce over 25 years. I have 4 grown children of my own, and 3 grandchildren. Someday I'd like to retire and travel, but I don't see how that will be easy if we don't have any retirement savings. Working for \$16.25 makes putting anything aside close to impossible.

I'm standing with my Union to fight for a \$20/hour minimum wage, benefits like paid time off and retirement, and a future where all PCAs are treated just like doctors and nurses, because in the end we do a lot of the footwork that helps the elderly and those with disabilities have lives of dignity at home. Thank you for your time.