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United for Quality Care

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SEIU District 1199 NE
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Morning Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Claire Martin. I live and work as a PCA in Middletown, CT. I come before you today to ask you to increase the funding for home care services. These services are critically important, and PCAs like me deserve to earn a living wage and receive quality benefits.

I have been working as a PCA for 15 years. I enjoy this work because I enjoy the connections and relationships you build with your consumer. You're in their lives everyday so you become like family. That aspect of the job is incredibly rewarding.

While I do love my job, it is difficult to get by on the wages I earn. As PCA's we do not earn a living wage. As a single person with no dependents, I should be able to have one full time job and be able to support myself. I think it is natural to want to stand on your own two feet and provide for yourself. It is definitely something I have always strived for, but it feels impossible to do this on what I make.

Housing insecurity is another issue I deal with. It has always been a goal of mine to live in my own place alone. However, I have never been able to afford to pay rent on my own and have always had to live with roommates. There have even been times when I've come close to being homeless. In these moments you cannot afford to be picky, you must live in whatever meager dwelling you can afford or with whoever will take you. It feels horrible to be this vulnerable and out of control of your own life.

A lack of any health insurance is also a big issue for PCAs. We are not offered health insurance through our jobs like most people, so many PCAs go without. I am somewhat fortunate because I am able to get health insurance through Access Health CT, which helps me to afford epi pens for my allergies and other medication I need to do my job efficiently. However this plan is still expensive and if I make any more money I will lose my eligibility.

With additional funding for home care services PCAs could be paid more and receive quality benefits. If this happened, I would be so much less vulnerable. When you make low wages you always have this feeling of desperation because you're always waiting for the other shoe to drop. But with higher wages I could be more in control of my life and future. Please support home care workers like me in Connecticut. Thank you for your time.