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Annakay McCalla, CNA
Touchpoints at Chestnut
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Annakay McCalla and I am a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) at Touchpoints at Chestnut in East Windsor, Connecticut. I have worked there for 8 years. I'm here today to ask for more funding for nursing home workers like me.

I love my job because I love my residents. It has truly become my passion. I love working with the elderly and it's nice to see them appreciate what I do. I wish I could sit and talk with the residents more, but we just don't have enough staff anymore to have those kinds of interactions very often.

We always work short staffed. There is not enough care time given to each resident. The more you rush the more stressful it is on caregivers and on residents. But in order to provide care to so many residents, we need to be constantly moving, constantly thinking.

In addition, we do not have enough supplies and the ones that we do have are cheap and fall apart, like our gloves. When we get masks, we have to wear the mask in rotation instead of getting a new one each day, and we have to share Equipment with Covid positive units because we don't have enough working equipment.

My coworkers and I have to work multiple jobs in order to make ends meet and at the same time our workload just keeps increasing more and more. With current wages we can barely pay bills and even barely put food in the house. We are tired and we're frustrated. We do a job that most people would cringe to do. It's not an easy job ---not physically, not mentally. You have to have a lot of heart and a lot of patience. We do everything we can so that our residents can live in dignity, but it's not enough. They deserve a higher quality of life and so do we.

No one ever thinks they'll need to be in a nursing home. I here to remind the Governor and the Legislature and the people of Connecticut: some day you will be elderly, some day your parents or loved ones will need the help of caregivers like me or my co-workers. One little accident can take away all of your independence. I ask you; wouldn't you want the best quality of care? Wouldn't you want to be taken care of by caregivers who are earning a fair wage.

The Governor and Legislature can fix this. The budget is a reflection of our state's priorities, and I believe that paying people a fair wage to care for our parents and grandparents ought to be a priority. Right now, that isn't the case. We do not believe that people who have these jobs should be living in, or just above, poverty.