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United for Quality Care

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Before the Appropriations Committee

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Esther Owusu. I am a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) employed at Icare's Westside facility in Manchester, Connecticut. I am here today to testify in support of an increase in Medicaid Funding to Nursing Homes across the state.

I have been employed at ICare Westside for 5 years. I love my job because taking care of people is my passion. I really enjoy the people that I work with, and my residents mean a lot to me. That's why I want to make sure that they are cared for properly and that they also keep their dignity as well.

Without proper funding, our homes don't hire enough direct care staff like me. For instance, the staffing ratio in my facility is 1 CNA to 10 residents. When staffing levels are so bad, it ends up hurting the people that that we care about, our residents. When staffing levels are bad, we are unable to provide the proper care that our residents need and deserve because there are simply not enough of us to give everyone the care that they should be getting. Additionally, equipment is lacking so bad that most times we find ourselves having to go to different units or floors to get the equipment that we need. Because of the lack of equipment, there are many times when end up sharing equipment between covid and non-covid units. The lack of funding even extends to common sense supplies like soap for bathing. For instance, we have used hand soap to bathe our residents for the past five years. Management only bought the proper soap about 2 months ago, but it still is not available for every shift. Sometimes, when I come in on second shift there is nothing left. In terms of PPE, Management only buys medium sized gloves and they just fall apart. We've tried to talk to Management about these issues many times, and they have been unresponsive to our concerns.

I hope that the committee hears and understands that it's not just the workers that need help but also the residents who can't speak for themselves. Please give us the help that we need in order to keep our residents in good health and good spirits. Thank you for your time.