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United for Quality Care

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Maribel Sanchez, CNA  
St John Paul

Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Maribel Sanchez and I am a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) at the St John Paul nursing home in Danbury, Connecticut. I have worked there for 3 years. I'm here today to ask for more funding for nursing home workers like me.

I have always been a caregiver, and love the work I do. Before moving to the United States ten years ago, I was a nurse in the Dominican Republic. After moving to the United States it made sense to pursue a career in healthcare. My mom was in a nursing home for a time before she passed, and so when I'm caring for my residents, I view them as my mother, father, brother, or sister. During COVID residents couldn't see their family and so we were their family. You can't do this job for the money because the pay is not good, you can only do this job if you care about your residents.

As a CNA, I feed people, help people with their hygiene, and all around take care of people. Finding the time to attend to all the needs of residents can be very challenging with short staffing. It is not uncommon to have one CNA caring for over 35 residents, specifically during first shift. While staffing has always been problematic, it became much worse during COVID. A lot of people quit out of fear of getting the virus. Without more staff to fill shifts, my coworkers and I were working over 50 hours a week.

It is very hard to give quality care when we are short staffed. Finding time to do anything was hard. Even finding the time to sit with a COVID positive resident as they passed away meant potentially falling behind on your work. We are supposed to get two 15 minute shifts but often can't take one break let alone two.

It is difficult to address short staffing when we are paid so poorly. With the wages I earn I live paycheck to paycheck. When I was working over 50 hours a week it was easier to pay my bills but I was always tired. Recently I've had to cut my hours in half because my 17 year old son is undergoing chemotherapy and I need to be home with him. But now that I am working less, my budget is much tighter and it is nearly impossible to save any money.

With increased funding for nursing homes, my facility could be staffed properly which would reduce burn out amongst staff. CNAs like me could also be paid more, which would allow us to save more money and provide better lives for our families. Please do what is right and increase funding for nursing homes. Thank you.