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United for Quality Care

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Shakira Khouri, CNA
Regal Care New Haven
SEIU District 1199 NE
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Shakira Khouri, I live in Bloomfield, CT, and I have been working at the St Mary's Home in West Hartford as a Dietary Aide for 15 years. I come before you today to urge you to increase funding for nursing homes like mine.

I enjoy my job because I enjoy taking care of the residents. They don't have another home, that is their home and we work hard to give them the life they deserve. As a dietary aide I have a number of responsibilities including helping with the tray line and helping to serve residents their meals. Dietary aides are often asked to do things outside our job description such as passing out supplements, because staffing is so low.

Low staffing impacts workers and residents. The staff get burnt out working as much as we are working. We are one person doing two peoples jobs. We can't even take our breaks because staffing is so poor. We have approximately 300 residents that we are responsible for feeding and only have 2-3 people to manage this task. We dish the food out in the kitchen and then bring the food to the residents in their rooms, which takes a long time. With more staff we could provide care properly. Meals could be prepared properly for the residents, which will improve their quality of life.

The pay we receive is not enough. So many of my coworkers rely on overtime to make ends meet. We don't get enough hours and have to work additional jobs just to survive. We are faced with choices like paying bills or putting food on the table, which doesn't make me feel good at all. Sometimes when you get your paycheck and just feel dread because it is not enough.

With increased funding for nursing homes we could staff our nursing homes properly. Residents would receive better care and experience a higher quality of life. Staff could be paid more, which would allow us to work less, spend more time with family, or maybe even save for retirement.

Please do what is right by nursing home workers and the residents we serve, and support increasing funding for our homes. Thank you for your time.