



**SEIU**Healthcare®  
United for Quality Care

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Mari Soto, Personal Care Attendant  
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Before the Appropriations Committee

Good morning Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Mari Soto and I live in New Britain. I've been in homecare for over 30 years, and for the past 3 years I've cared for my dad. When my dad qualified for services, I almost wanted to turn down the chance because there are so many problems in this field. Not enough hours, no paid sick time, no vacation, no retirement. I've always had to work 2-3 jobs to cover all the things lacking in homecare. I have a dual degree in business administration and finance, and a second degree in business management, and I was hoping to find a more stable career.

But prior to that, my dad had been in 3 different facilities, and his health was really going downhill. I knew that if I didn't pull him out, he wouldn't survive, so I had to take a deep breath and continue to deal with the shortcomings to make sure my dad was home.

So, I still have 3 jobs. I care for my dad full time; I'm a school bus driver; and I do administrative work for a property management company. I go to work as a bus driver at 5am, I'm home by 8am to care for my dad until 2pm, then back to the school bus and home at 5pm, then care for my dad until he goes to bed at 10 or 11pm. It's exhausting. I wouldn't have to do this if we had all the benefits that are long overdue: health insurance, paid time off, a living wage, and retirement.

Instead, I have to purchase my health insurance through Obamacare, which is not cheap. And without paid time off, when I get sick, I either have to work sick, or forgo getting paid. When I broke my ankle, I was out for 2 weeks and lost 2 weeks of pay – I fell behind on my mortgage and many of my bills. If we'd had paid sick days, I may not have faced so much hardship. I haven't had a vacation in 3 years, because I can't afford it. And after 32 years in the workforce, I don't have any retirement savings. I think I'll be working, God willing, until I can no longer work.

If we had benefits in homecare, like health insurance, paid sick days, and retirement, I wouldn't have to juggle the constant stress of plan A, plan B, and plan C to make ends meet – and I wouldn't have to work 3 jobs. These benefits are a **MUST**, and why do we even need to fight for something we should have always had? For decades, since this job existed, we as predominantly Black and Brown women, have struggled and suffered. We are asking for your support to right these historical wrongs, and make this a job that truly acknowledges our skill and professionalism in caring for another human being. Thank you for your time.