

White House Conference on Aging (WHCOA): Connecticut Public Comment
TOPIC: Long-Term Services & Supports
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My name is Gloria Duquette and I have been a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) for 9 years and I am a member of District 1199/SEIU Healthcare. Thank you for hearing my story about some of the problems in the current system of long-term services and supports.

As a CNA, I help residents with everything they need from bathing and feeding to often times being their only friend and companion. I love working because I love my residents. I frequently work in the rehab unit, and I get the opportunity to meet different, interesting, loving people every day. They are my family, and the nursing home is our home. When I'm not at work, my residents miss me and I miss them.

But just because I love what I do doesn't mean I shouldn't be paid fairly.

I am currently working three different jobs. For 40 hours per week, I'm a CNA at Kimberly Hall South nursing home in Windsor. I work another 32 hours each week as CNA at Saint Mary's Home nursing home in West Hartford. And for around 14 hours each week, I also work as a home care aide with Jewish Family Services of Greater Hartford.

Why do I work so many hours? Because each of my three jobs pays me less than \$15 an hour. Sometimes, no matter how hard I work – no matter how tired I feel – I still struggle to make ends meet. I have been a part-time student on again and off again since 2008, but because I get paid so little and have to work so many hours, I have been unable to finish.

Nursing home care is largely paid for with state and federal Medicaid dollars. Our legislative leaders here in Connecticut and in Washington, D.C. can create tens of thousands of better jobs by prioritizing targeted funding for caregiving jobs to pay at least \$15 an hour. This would make such a difference in my life, and so would allow me to make even more of a difference in the lives of the elderly people I take care of.

The nursing home residents to whom I provide care are often hardworking people who dedicated their lives to their families and their communities. We owe it to them to provide an environment in which they can live and grow as happily as possible.