



Testimony on SB328
The Nursing Home Staffing Crisis Act of 2024
Position: **FAV**

To Chair Guzzone and members of the Senate Budget & Taxation Committee,

My name is Kirsathl Kennedy. I work as Geriatric Nursing Assistant at a nursing home, and I am a member of 1199SEIU, United Healthcare Workers East. I support SB328: The Nursing Home Staffing Crisis Funding Act of 2024, and urge the Committee to issue a favorable report. This bill ensures that 75% of skilled nursing Medicaid provider reimbursements goes directly towards worker wages and benefits.

Providing care has always been a part of my life since I was young. Growing up, I saw my grandmother take care of our family members and then when my grandmother's health declined, I helped my mom, who is also a GNA, take care of my grandma. This work is personal to me and I believe that we need better care infrastructures that can ensure we can take care of our loved ones with love, dignity, and support.

I've worked over 60 hours a week and had my take home pay be about \$800. This is barely enough to pay my rent, and make sure I am paying all my bills.

Not only am I working night shifts and long hours, there is always a shortage of GNAs so while the state standard staff to patient ratio is to 40, there are weeks where I am taking care of about 60 patients. Even if the state standard is too low, we need more GNAs to patients so that every patient is getting quality care.

It was already bad before the pandemic but the pandemic really burnt us out and showed us how little the system really cares about us or our patients. We were overworked, underpaid, and at risk of spreading COVID-19 all while trying to take care of our families when we get home.

It's not just nurses, our housekeeping and dietary aides in the nursing homes are the most understaffed. It takes longer for rooms to get disinfected and cleaned, patient meal times are impacted as well.

I remember this one patient in particular. He came into the nursing home relatively healthy and mobile. He would go on walks around the building, but soon he would start getting bed sores and unable to get out of bed and became completely bed-ridden. I have seen patients die because management did not ensure we had the appropriate number of staff on call.

Patients are dying, and will continue to die in heartbreaking and inhuman conditions if we let our long term care system continue to put profit over people. Care Can't Wait.

Sincerely,

Kirsathl Kennedy