



Testimony – SB 518
Career Pathways for Healthcare Workers Program
Position: Favorable

My name is Nakkitta Starkes. I'm a Certified Medicine Aide at Autumn Lake Homewood and a member of 1199SEIU. I am writing this testimony to express my support for HB 821, the Career Pathways for Healthcare Workers Program. I'm testifying because I have greatly benefitted from my union's career training fund, and I know how important it is for healthcare workers to be able to take career training courses.

I've been providing care at Autumn Lake for 23 years, and I'm a Certified Medicine Aide now because our training fund paid for my courses and license. Every day, I provide medication for about 40-45 patients, I take blood pressure, and I assist with their everyday daily activities – I'll help them bathe, help get them dressed, and be a familiar face for them. I've taken other courses as well, and I'm currently taking my pre-requirements to go through the LPN program because I want to further my career in the nursing field.

Despite the hazards and difficulties in nursing, it also has its pleasures. For me, when my mom took sick, it made me want to better educate myself on medical issues. I also want to continue in nursing so I can be there for residents who don't get to see or talk to their loved ones. I love to provide care and put a smile on their face. For me, it's rewarding.

I would not have been able to attend these career classes without the funding from the training fund because of my bills and taking care of my family. It's always hard to find the money and the time, but especially now with the pandemic, things can be even tougher. Things can be really tough, but with the funding, I'm able to still attend school and still provide for my family and attend school.

With the staffing crisis that a lot of facilities are going through, it's really important that people like me who want to keep caring for our communities are able to push our careers forward. With funding, you make it possible for people like me to stay and grow in the nursing field. That's why I urge you to vote yes on Senate Bill 518. Thank you for your time.