



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

Chair Guzzone and Members of the Senate Budget & Taxation Committee,

My name is Helen Sutton, I am a Certified Nursing Assistant & Geriatric Nursing Assistant at a Long Term Care facility in Baltimore County, and a member of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. I urge you to issue a favorable report on SB328: The Nursing Home Staffing Crisis Funding Act of 2024 to raise wages for Long Term Care workers.

I've been working in healthcare for 45 years. Every day, I care for the residents of my facility with my whole heart. I get them dressed, make sure they are comfortable, assist with hygiene, and help them eat. This work has always been challenging, but in my nearly five decades of working in healthcare, I have never seen a challenge as severe as the short staffing we are currently facing. Short staffing was an issue even before the COVID19 pandemic, but since the pandemic it has become a full blown crisis. It's not just CNAs/GNAs working short staffed, *every* department is short.

In my facility, we work short staffed every day. We have 20 patients per GNA, which is unsustainable for workers and means that residents don't get to spend the ideal amount of time with caregivers. We get the job done, but there isn't time to go above and beyond for our residents as we were able to before the short staffing crisis. The residents deserve to get the care they pay for. Healthcare workers do the best we can, but there's simply not enough of us to meet all the residents' special needs.

It is painful for me to even speak on the toll short staffing has taken on my physical and mental health. What makes this worse is the constant abuse we face from management. If we are feeling exhausted to the point where we need to use the sick days we are legally entitled to, they shame us for calling out. If we come in to work when we are exhausted, they bully us for being tired. It's a lose-lose situation.

Raising wages for workers in Long Term Care will help stop the short staffing crisis in its tracks. Many years ago, management would give bonuses to workers if there was a day when we worked short, and those days were few and far between. Back then, workers had financial incentive to stay on the job. Now,

because our wages are so low and we don't get short staffing bonuses, a lot of workers are quitting. They are tired of working short staffed for low wages, and the rest of us are left to pick up the pieces.

For the sake of healthcare workers and the patients we care for, please vote YES on SB328. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Helen Sutton

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