



Testimony on HB462
The Nursing Home Staffing Crisis Act of 2024
Position: **FAV**

Chair Pena Melnyk and Members of the HGO Committee,

My name is Pat Walker, I am a Geriatric Nursing Assistant (GNA) at a Long Term Care facility in Montgomery County, and a member of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. I've been a GNA in Long Term Care for 23 years. I urge you to issue a favorable report on HB462: The Nursing Home Staffing Crisis Funding Act of 2024 to raise wages for Long Term Care workers.

I work the 7am-3pm shift, which is the most difficult shift because of all the things that need to be completed in that timeframe. When I clock in, I do rounds to make sure everyone is breathing, go get my daily assignments, and give residents showers or hand baths. This must be finished in time to feed them breakfast at 8:45am. After breakfast, I help get the residents out of bed and do linen and depends changes by 12pm when we start serving lunch. Then the cycle repeats. Before I clock out, I also must document every interaction with every resident.

We have 15-20 patients per GNA in my facility, which is not nearly enough. If multiple residents ring their alarm indicating they need assistance at the same time, they are left to wait in bed because we literally cannot be in two places at once. That means residents develop ulcers and bedsores, and they become very stressed out.

Short staffing is as stressful for the workers as it is for the residents. When I look around at my coworkers who have been doing this work for 40+ years, I notice that every single one of them walks with a limp or has some other physical ailment caused by the toll working short takes on our bodies. Our mental health suffers too because there is no outlet for the stress we experience on the job. We just have to grin and bear it because we don't want that stress to impact residents or our coworkers.

The best way to tackle the short staffing crisis in Long Term Care is to raise workers' wages. That would recruit a new generation of workers to join the healthcare field to fill staffing gaps. It would also make it so workers like me who have been doing this for a long time are properly cared for. Because of the cost of living, I work 60+ hours per week, and I still struggle to afford things like groceries. I'm constantly exhausted from working overtime every week. If I received a wage increase, I could scale back my hours to 40 hours. That would give me time to rest and to live, and I would be even better at my job.

The Nursing Home Staffing Crisis Funding Act of 2024 is a win for healthcare workers and a win for residents of Long Term Care facilities. Please vote YES on HB462. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Pat Walker