



Testimony on SB761
Funding for Wage Increases for Medical Provider Workers
Position: **FAVORABLE**

To Chair Pendergrass and Members of the House & Government Operations Committee,

My name is Lucy Caulker Nelson. I am a healthcare worker and a member of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. 1199 is the largest healthcare workers union in the United States. We have 10,000 members in Maryland and Washington DC. Our union endorses SB761 and we ask the Committee to vote **yes** on this legislation to increase wages for healthcare workers.

My coworkers and I work hard every day to provide our patients with high quality healthcare on the frontlines of the COVID19 pandemic. What has made the COVID19 crisis even more difficult for healthcare workers is the short staffing crisis. In the facility where I work, my coworkers and I have a joke about management giving us bad staffing ratios. We say, "they give us two bags of cement and tell us to go build a skyscraper!" Even though we sometimes laugh, the short staffing crisis has serious consequences for us and our patients.

Due to short staffing, patients are not always able to get the care they because there are not enough workers on shift. We want to spend time with our patients to give them the best care we can, but with so few of us working it is not possible to spend enough time with our patients. Being forced to rush through patient care can lead to medical mistakes, which can sometimes be fatal, and we never want that to happen to our patients and their families. When accidents do happen it breaks our hearts, and often times we experience abuse from family members who are mad at us because they don't know that management is to blame for the accident because they are not hiring and retaining enough healthcare workers to run a safe facility.

Healthcare workers are stressed and burned out because we are being forced to do almost twice the amount of work than we should be doing. I have been a healthcare worker for many years, and I have seen more people quitting throughout the pandemic than ever before. Some of my coworkers and I feel guilty if we call out of work because we know that it will be even

harder on our coworkers if we take a day off, even when we really need one. It's not just my work life that is impacted by this problem; my home life is impacted too. I am a wife and mom. I'm so tired after work that I can't give my two boys and my spouse the time they need with me, and the time I need with them.

We have been making our concerns about staffing ratios loud and clear to management, but they have done nothing to address short staffing. They keep telling us to work harder, blaming us, and just expecting things to change without actually making any changes. **One of the biggest contributors to the short staffing crisis is the low wages healthcare workers are paid.** That is why we need our lawmakers to pass legislation so that when the state gives healthcare facilities money, money is earmarked to go directly to workers through increased wages. **Wage increases will produce safer working conditions and better patient care by recruiting & retaining more healthcare workers.** Please vote **yes** on SB761. Thank you for reading my testimony.

Sincerely,

Lucy Caulker Nelson
Delegate, 1199SEIU UHW E.
Prince George's County Resident