

March 5, 2025
Nichole Ward, Dietary Aide
North Providence

Subject: Opposition to Budget Article 8 (Section 4) and Article 10 (Section 2)

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Nichole Ward and I live in North Providence. I have worked at the Greenville nursing center for almost 15 years, starting out as a dietary aide. As a dietary aide at a nursing home isn't just scrubbing pots and flipping burgers. The residents need to eat each day, so as a dietary aide, you take on a lot of responsibility such as knowing all the dietary restrictions, like renal diets, ground diets, puree diets, allergies, etc. It's a lot of responsibility for basically minimum wage. That is why my testimony today is in opposition to Budget Article 8 (Section 4) and Article 10 (Section 2).

Six years ago, I went to school to be a Certified Nursing Assistant. As a CNA, you're responsible for the hands-on care of our residents. Without us, they wouldn't get out of bed, get dressed, shower, or sometimes even eat. Lots of patients can't eat on their own so we have to assist them. Being a CNA is very stressful. We have too many residents and just a limited amount of time to provide proper care for each. I later went back to school to become a Certified Medication Technician (CMT). Now I have even more responsibilities such as passing medications out to all my residents. In most states, this would be the job of an LPN, but I only make a little over \$17/hr to do this work.

I work for one of the largest nursing home companies in the country called Genesis Healthcare. The former CEO of Genesis got a \$5.2 million retention bonus one year, then he retired. That's on top of a \$935,000 annual bonus, \$650,000 retirement bonus, and \$300,000 consulting contract. That means he made *at least* \$7.5 million that year. Most of that money came from Medicaid, our tax dollars.

The majority of the week me and my coworkers are short staffed. This makes our residents feel lonely and neglected. A lot of our residents don't really have family that visits. We're their family. When we are running around, they don't get that human conversation and connection that they need.

One time there were only 3 CNAs in a unit with 31 residents. One resident was asking to go back to bed since 1:00pm, but it takes two people to transfer someone into bed and we were all just too busy. It was almost 4:00pm before we finally got him laying down. Imagine if it took 3 hours to lay down when you wanted to. Another patient's bed was broken while other patients had to use the bathroom.

I can't tell you how disappointed and upset I am in the company I work for. They should have used that money for supplies for the patients or on their workers who are taking care of them.

The nursing home companies may line up to tell you they can't afford it. But we see through their lies. Genesis always tells us our home is losing money. But the taxpayers are the ones losing money. The residents and healthcare heroes are the ones suffering.

Currently I am in school to become a Nursing Home Administrator. I want to run a nursing home the right way, to give my staff and residents the supplies, wages, and care they need because too many nursing homes put profit over their residents. We need the General Assembly to protect the Nursing Home Staffing and Quality Care Act and oppose Budget Article 8 (Section 4) and Article 10 (Section 2). We need to stop this corporate greed and give the money to the people who need it.