Testimony in Support of the Nursing Home Safe Staffing and Quality Care Act
(H-5012 Rep. Slater) March 4, 2021

My name's Dawn DaRocha and I live in East Providence. I want to talk about the education piece of this bill, the Nursing Home Safe Staffing and Quality Care Act.

I've been a CNA or Certified Nursing Assistant for 17 years, the last 4 at my current job. Over the years, the types of residents we've gotten has changed a lot. The residents now have a lot more mental illness. A lot of the residents on our floor have dementia, memory loss, recovering from strokes. One of our residents will constantly call out "help me, help me," but when you go to see him, he says he never hit the call light or asked for help. Sometimes residents talk about nonsensical things, and I really don't know how to respond. These problems have been 1000 times worse with COVID, the patients are so lonely and scared.

I think I'm really good at my job. I love my residents like my own family, and they all smile and are happy to see me. They miss me on my days off, and I miss them. I look forward to seeing them and learn something new about them every day.

But I would really like more education and training on how to take care of residents with mental health issues. I've never done that before. I never learned in my CNA class how to talk to a dementia resident. But now that's what I do all day.

Nursing homes need more resources for training staff on how to deal with mental illness because our residents deserve the best care and we need the education and training to provide them the care they deserve.

Thank you,

Dawn DaRocha, East Providence: