



May 5, 2026

Subject: Testimony in Support of S-2882 – Supporting Self-Directed Care and Direct Support Professionals, Submitted by a Member of SEIU 1199NE

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services:

My name is Wanda Seed. I have worked as a Certified Nursing Assistant at Oakland Grove, a nursing home, for the past 23 years. I am also a home caregiver through the Personal Choice Program and have been providing care for my mother for the last six years.

S-2882 would give thousands of home care workers who care for individuals with developmental disabilities the opportunity to join a union, and I strongly support it.

I want to start by saying I love my job. It is an honor to provide care to nursing home residents, many of whom have helped build our country. I am also grateful that I am able to give my mother the care she needs and allow her to live with dignity at home. She is 74 years old and faces serious health challenges, including diabetes and blindness. After my father passed away a few years ago, she became depressed and began losing her eyesight, first in one eye and then in the other. She is more stable now, but she depends on me for everything. She still lives on her own, but I help with groceries, errands, and taking her to medical appointments in Boston.

Currently, I work 40 hours a week as a home care worker, but in reality I care for my mother 24 hours a day. I also work 24 hours a week at the nursing home, for a total of 64 hours each week. With so many hours, it is exhausting. There are times when I get home from the nursing home at midnight and have to get back up at 5:00 a.m. I feel like I have no life outside of working and caring for my mother.

Being a caregiver is physically demanding, and it once caused a serious back injury that took me out of work. As a home care worker, I do not receive vacation time, sick days, or health insurance. This is especially concerning because I have osteoporosis and fibromyalgia, and the

cost of my health insurance through HealthSource increased from \$500 to \$1,022 per month this past January.

For these reasons and more, I believe unions are one of the only ways to create real change. I was interested in organizing a union at my nursing home long before the pandemic. We were close to success, but management scared people off. We kept pushing, and in late 2024, we were finally able to join SEIU 1199NE along with caregivers at three other facilities that were part of Athena Health Care Systems, a for-profit nursing home chain that owned Oakland Grove and other facilities.

When we won our first contract, I was overwhelmed with happiness. It was a dream come true. I went home and cried tears of joy. We finally had a legal contract that made management more accountable to both workers and residents.

I was also one of 1,700 consumer-directed home care workers who voted to join SEIU 1199NE in late 2024. We are still working to negotiate our first contract with the state, but being part of a union has made me feel powerful. I now serve on the bargaining committee for both nursing home and home care workers. It is an incredible feeling to sit across from decision-makers as equals and advocate for better wages, staffing, and respect.

We still have a long way to go before the state fully recognizes the value of home care workers, even though home care saves millions of dollars compared to institutional care. People who receive care at home are with those who know them, love them, and keep them safe. At home, people receive one-on-one care. Stress is lower, and that is when people can truly heal.

All home care workers should have the ability to form a union. We work incredibly hard, and many people do not understand how difficult caregiving work really is. This is especially true for caregivers of individuals with developmental disabilities, who provide critical support to a vulnerable population. Giving them the ability to organize would allow them to improve working conditions, raise wages, and provide more stable care.

For these reasons, I urge you to support S-2882.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Wanda Seed,
Certified Nursing Assistant and Personal Care Attendant

