

**TESTIMONY FOR SENATE AGING COMMITTEE**  
**IN SUPPORT OF FAIR PAY FOR HOME CARE BILL**

My name is Colleen Downs, and I am a disability Systems Advocate at North Country Center for Independence. Our agency represents Clinton, Essex and Franklin Counties as an independent living center. In this role I meet with agencies, individuals and families about their experiences with LTC facilities, transition to home and services that support staying at home.

Based on my experience, I am writing to urge the Senate to pass the Fair Pay for Home Care bill in the 2022 budget.

The current state of home health care and long-term care facilities is not sustainable in New York. I see struggle and heartbreak for people with disabilities, seniors, and family members who go to extreme lengths to ensure they find the best care for daily living. A vast majority of people who enter nursing homes would prefer to transition home where possible.

*Long Term Care Facts*

*69% of Americans will need long term care for an average of 3 years*

*70% of Americans that are 65 and older will need long term care at some point in their lives*

*Per the Administration for Community Living*

I recently learned of a 40 y/o woman with Multiple Sclerosis who needed rehabilitation as her illness advanced. When her rehab was sufficiently advanced, she transitioned back home once she secured a home health worker. She did so well that she became a volunteer for the LTC Ombudsman program. With her experience, she excelled at the job. Like so many people who need home health care, aides came and went, and it took time between aides. She needed home health to manage her daily living so she gave up her ombudsman work and returned to the nursing home. The impact has been profound: she feels a loss of purpose, a lack of creativity and giving. She remains in the nursing home. Unless the Senate passes the Fair Pay for Home Care bill, the lack of funding will continue to drive and/or keep people in nursing homes including individuals who could be at home near loved ones and community supports.

In closing, a common argument to increase home care wages (150% of minimum wage) is the comparison to fast food workers, who earn \$2.50/hour more. It should be noted that this does not consider the inequity of benefits guaranteed to fast food workers that most health care workers do not get. Large businesses like fast food chains have a benefit load of about 25-28% of pay per employee. These benefits come in the form of growth opportunities, college education, time off, insurance and other meaningful perks, even for part-time staff. Many home care workers have limited to no benefits which further widens the compensation gap.

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to share my experiences on behalf of so many families and individuals affected by home health care. I hope you will urge your colleagues to pass Fair Pay for Home Care in the 2022 legislative budget.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for further information.

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