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Member of SEIU 1199P, Pennsylvania's Health Care Union  
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My name is Elaine Oley. I'm a certified nurse assistant, or a "CNA," at Broad Mountain Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Frackville.

Mandatory overtime is a big problem for caregivers in nursing homes, the patients we care for, and the nursing home industry.

**Let me tell you what it's like for our patients when their caregivers are working mandatory overtime.**

I worked the night shift. My routine was to go home after my shift, take a shower, and go to bed. But when I was mandated to work another four hours, my body was still in the routine of going to sleep.

So I felt like I was on auto-pilot. Anything could have happened and I wouldn't have known. I could have missed something in the behavior or routines of my residents, dropped a resident who I was lifting, anything.

That is certainly not a safe situation for anyone's loved one. And it happens every day in nursing homes across this state.

I worked in the dementia unit on night shift and there were two aides and one charge nurse to care for 45 residents. On the bad nights, when the residents were active and calling all night, I would be exhausted by the end of my shift – even before being mandated. My patience would be shot.

Having a lot of patience is very important on the dementia floor because . . . (Elaine insert something here.)

When you are exhausted, pushed past your limit, you do not have the patience and you don't have the physical strength to deliver the kind of care they need.

**Ending mandatory overtime is necessary because it increases staff turnover and makes the staffing situation worse.**

Mandatory overtime burns workers out – physically and mentally. Then you have more workers calling off or quitting. Staffing levels fall and you have more mandatory overtime which makes the problem worse.

High staff turnover is really hard on our residents.

Many of our dedicated workers are older, and they can't physically take the long hours. And younger workers might have families, and the mandation is very hard to manage if you have small children to care for.

To fill vacancies, we might have 12 nurses' aides come through a class. Two will quit immediately. Two will quit as soon as they hit the floor. We're lucky if we can keep 1 or 2 out of each class, all the others drop out.

It's like a puppy mill, they keep cranking out another class, and cranking out another class.

But the training they get doesn't really prepare them. It takes a year or 18 months to develop semi-decent skills, where you know how to move and monitor your patients.

They need an incentive to stay, because our resident's care depends on it. We work in long-term care. It's not a hospital where you are there for a short time. It's very important for our patients to get to know us.

They depend on us for their most private cares – things they used to do for themselves. They have given up everything, their homes and possessions. Many times their minds don't work like they used to. And it's very important that they become comfortable with a familiar face. And that takes a while.

A lot of what we do is sensing their needs and monitoring their behavior patterns. Knowing if something isn't right depends on knowing what is normal for them – not necessarily what is normal for you or me, but what is normal for them.

When you have high turnover, you don't know what is normal for them. New staff who are bouncing around will not recognize a change in routine that may be a signal that something else is wrong.

Our job is not in a warehouse. We need caring people to stay in this profession, develop relationships with their residents, and get the experience they need to deliver the best care.

We have an aging population in Pennsylvania. There are many more people in nursing homes than there are in hospitals. They deserve good care by people who know them and their needs.

**We need to stop mandatory overtime because it forces good people to leave this work, and that hurts our patients because they don't get the consistency, and the personal care that they need.**