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Contact: Julia Ofman, julia.ofman@berlinrosen.com, 646 246 8211

Mindy Berman, mindyb@1199.org, 518-229-0486

1199SEIU Nursing Home Workers Win Key Industry Reforms to Improve Quality of Care for Residents, Transparency

The largest healthcare union launched “Invest in Quality Care” campaign to pressure Albany leaders to enact overdue reforms; plan to continue to advocate for more reforms this session

An estimated 15,000 nursing home residents died from COVID-19 due to a broken system that failed to hold nursing home owners accountable

Today, 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East members across New York won a number of key reforms to the state’s nursing home industry, including a requirement that owners spend 70% of revenue on quality care for residents, including 40% on staffing. These reforms will improve care quality for thousands of the most vulnerable New Yorkers, and raise standards of care across the industry. The inclusion of nursing home reform in the 2021 State Budget came as a direct result of worker activism, including in recent weeks through the union’s “Invest in Quality Care” campaign. The union pledged to continue its advocacy through the end of session, calling for additional reforms including establishing minimum standards for hours spent on resident care.

“Our members took their grief and anger over what happened over the past year and turned it into action to demand reform, and today, Albany listened. This pandemic has made abundantly clear that the broken nursing home industry has allowed owners to maximize their own profits at the expense of providing quality care. For years it has been residents, workers and families who have paid the price. We thank Governor Cuomo, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Heastie for ensuring these essential reforms are enshrined in law,” said **Milly Silva, Executive Vice President of 1199SEIU’s Nursing Home Division**. “The past year has brought so much pain to residents, their families and the workers who tirelessly provide the best care they can. This victory belongs to all of them. Our members will continue to push for the rest of our reform agenda, including joining 38 other states in establishing minimum hours of care per resident per day.”

The “Invest in Quality Care” campaign energized union members and supporters across New York, with multiple days of action, hundreds of informational pickets, demonstrations and vigils, and thousands of calls and emails to state legislatures to urge passage of industry reform to improve transparency and hold owners accountable.

“This was probably one of the worst years I can think of, filled with illness and loss. But if one good thing has happened, it is that lawmakers listened to us and are doing something about the problems we have been talking about for years. Nursing home owners have not respected their workers and that means they didn’t respect their residents. They put their desire to make profit over the needs of the residents which resulted in short staffing and a lack of resources – all making it difficult for me and my co-workers to give our residents the quality care they deserve. Now the owners will be required to spend their money on resident care – on direct care. Finally, quality resident care will be the priority,” said **Audrey Campbell, a C.N.A. in Yonkers.**

The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare for all New Yorkers what nursing home workers have known for years -- that the broken system enabled owners to maximize their own profits while residents and families paid the price. This victory is a historic turning point for the nursing home industry as residents, their families, and the workers who tirelessly provide the best care they can get the investment necessary to give quality care.

“This nursing home reform will make the industry stronger, because it will allow us to deliver the best possible quality care. Isn’t that the common goal? Now that owners must spend a minimum of 70% of their revenue on resident care and, 40% on direct care, we will be able to do our jobs caring for our residents under improved conditions, with better staffing and enough supplies. We didn’t ask for much. We simply asked that the industry practice honesty and transparency — and that owners stand for quality care, not personal profit. After all this time—after lobbying, and thousands of emails, and texts and phone calls, our voices were finally heard by Albany lawmakers,” said **Ed Ferguson, a COTA on Long Island.**

“Most of the people I work with are tired and exhausted, COVID-19 has wreaked havoc for the residents and staff. We need relief physically with adequate staffing for the residents and us. And with Albany passing nursing home reform legislation, we know they heard us and that all of our work has been noticed. We are relieved!” said **Charlene Rederick, who works at Ellicott Center in Buffalo.**

“I’ve been a nurse for 30 years, I’ve watched the industry change, and up until now, not for the better. I can sincerely say that these industry reforms are historic. Our residents are the well-deserving winners when we have the ability to provide them with the best possible quality care. It’s exactly one year since my own COVID diagnosis. I am grateful to be healthy again, caring for my residents—and with these reforms, I see light at the end of the tunnel,” said **Eileen Dunnion, an RN in Westchester.**

“I am relieved, more than anything else. This reform is a long time coming and I am glad that Albany finally heard us. Knowing that I will be able to give my residents the care they deserve is wonderful. The fact that nursing home owners will be required to put resident care before their personal profit and that they will be held accountable is a key to raising care standards in the entire industry,” said **Mary Samaroo an LPN in Far Rockaway, Queens.**

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ABOUT

1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East is the largest and fastest-growing healthcare union in America. We represent over 450,000 nurses and caregivers throughout Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Washington, D.C. and Florida. Our mission is to achieve quality care and good jobs for all. For more information: <http://www.1199seiu.org/>