

Submitted Testimony

**Joint Legislative Public Budget Hearing
Workforce Development
February 3, 2016
Testimony on Behalf of Tracy Hatch, LPN**

Hello, my name is Tracy Hatch. I have been an LPN almost as long as I've held any other title including wife and mother. I have been an LPN for 30 years. I started at \$4.93 an hour in 1986 at Cuba hospital. I now work at a skilled nursing facility in Houghton, NY and after 22 years there I make \$18.32. I also work a second job at the pharmacy in my small town. My husband and I love our community. We have raised three boys and have six grandchildren. My concerns for the future are great. Our income has gone up too slowly, not matching the cost to live or raise a family. We have struggled and our children are having even a harder time of it. My boys have held paying jobs since they were 12 years old, and used their income to supplement what we could not afford to provide. As a parent that makes you feel like a failure. Now, I still work two jobs, and while they no longer live with me, I help them pay their car insurance and student loans. I am blessed with my grandchildren, but worry that their futures will be even more difficult to navigate.

I love the work I do. As an LPN in a skilled nursing facility I am caretaker, family and friend to my residents. Like family, we are hugged, kicked, spit on, kissed and swore at daily. Our work is physically, mentally and emotionally draining. My co-workers and I have to support each other, help each other through difficult times because we love and rely on each other. It hurts me when I know my co-workers are struggling. They come to work and put on a smile while they are facing losing their homes, bank calls, daycare struggles, and lack of staff to help on the job. Many of my co-workers work well past the age of retirement because that is simply not an option for them.

I am afraid for the future of my residents. Why would someone choose to do this worry and carry such a heavy responsibility for such low pay? Even with the desire to do this work, people are forced to make the decision between their residents and their own families. If my co-workers were earning \$15 an hour right now, they wouldn't be faced with that choice. They would be able to make it to work reliably, provide for their families, and be less stressed. That is the winning formula for our residents. That is the winning formula for all of us.