



SERVICE EMPLOYEES
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Good Afternoon Mr. Chair and members of Committee,

My name is Sandra Powell and I work at Legacy, Good Samaritan Hospital in Portland, Oregon. I have been employed in the dietary department for 15 years.

I come before you today to discuss an issue that means a great deal to me and to my co-workers at Good Samaritan. Many community members, including my own family and friends, assumed that when I found employment in the health care industry that I would receive excellent health care coverage. Sadly, that is not the reality for me or my co-workers.

Through our union we have been able to reduce some of the cost of health care by negotiating with Legacy, but the remaining cost is still very high. As a dietary employee my pay is low, making it difficult to afford such things as co-pays, residual billing, and prescriptions.

Recently I found myself in the middle of a life threatening situation and was forced to make unsafe decisions regarding treatment. I was experiencing the symptoms of a heart attack. My gut instinct was that I needed help immediately and could not drive my car in the shape I was in. Common sense would say call an ambulance, but my insurance coverage does not include ambulance charges so that wasn't an option. I called my sister in a panic and asked her to come and bring me to the hospital. Once again I had to think about my insurance coverage when I remembered that my co-pay to go to the Emergency Department is \$100.00. I had no choice so I went. I was immediately admitted. One hundred dollars may not seem like much money but when you live from pay check to pay check it is. This money could have been spent on my basic living expenses and buying necessities for my grandchildren.

It has been two months since my stay in the hospital and I live in fear of the bill that is coming in the mail. Our insurance only covers 80% of the charges I incurred in the hospital. The remaining balance will be thousands of dollars.

Every day I work hard to take care of patients in my hospital and help to make profit for Legacy. All that I am asking on behalf of myself and my co-workers is that we have access to affordable healthcare, and that we can use the services that we help to provide when we need them.

Thank you for your time today and for listening to my story.

Sandra Powell