

To my younger self, starting your first PSW shift in long-term care:

Chart Note: Patient ID – Natasha Chigumira, Age 19. Diagnosis – Idealistic. Symptoms: Willingness to run doubled shifts, skip breaks, lift alone.

Here's what no textbook showed you: the math that doesn't add up. One worker, twelve residents. Minutes per person: less than a bathroom break. You'll learn to ration dignity—quick washes, cold meals, tears held until the supply closet.

The real wound isn't burnout. It's moral distress: knowing Mrs. Chen needs help eating, but call bells pile like an ER waiting room. You can't clone yourself. But with SEIU Healthcare, we're not asking for clones. We're asking for ratios—laws that say one PSW to five residents isn't greed, it's safety.

With SEIU, we're bargaining for violence prevention programs, because getting kicked and bitten isn't "part of the job." We're fighting for paid sick days that don't punish you for catching what residents carry. For benefits that recognize your bad back isn't weakness—it's the weight of a system that broke first.

To future you: I hope you work where "team" means enough hands to turn a patient without injury. Where charting isn't rushed. Where the only tears are from joy, not exhaustion.

SEIU isn't a union to me. It's the voice I didn't have at 19. The one that says: You can't pour from an empty cup, so let's fill the damn cup together. Legislation, enforcement, respect. That's the prescription.

And younger me? One day, you'll clock out on time. And feel proud, not guilty. Hold on for that.

—Your future self, still in the fight.