

When Strength Wears Scrubs

Dear Younger Me,

You will grow up thinking strength looks loud.

You'll think strength is standing at the front of the room, giving speeches, carrying every burden without breaking.

But one day, you'll learn that strength sometimes wears scrubs.

You'll watch it walk through your front door after a twelve-hour shift. You'll see it in your mother's tired eyes and aching knees. You'll hear it in the quiet sighs after long days of lifting patients heavier than one body should have to carry, working through missed lunch breaks because there is no one available to cover the floor.

You'll watch healthcare workers pour every part of themselves into caring for others while slowly being asked to give more and receive less.

You'll see healthcare staffing shortages across Ontario become heavier workloads for workers already carrying too much.

You'll see underfunding create longer wait times and fewer hands available to care for patients.

You'll see burnout become treated as part of the job rather than a sign that something needs to change.

And perhaps the hardest part will be realizing that the people caring for everyone else are often left without enough care themselves.

But younger me, don't let that make you hopeless.

Let it become your reason.

Because you were never meant to stay silent.

You were always meant to advocate.

You'll realize that your dream of becoming a lawyer was never simply about law—it was about people. It was about becoming a voice for those who feel unheard and standing beside those carrying burdens too heavy for one person alone.

And that is where organizations like SEIU Healthcare matter.

A union is more than contracts and negotiations. It is people standing together and saying: *enough*. Enough understaffing. Enough burnout. Enough asking healthcare workers to sacrifice themselves in order to save others.

I hope that with SEIU Healthcare, and with future advocates like me, we can continue pushing for safer working conditions, stronger staffing supports, fair treatment, and policies that protect the well-being of the people who spend their lives protecting others.

So younger me, keep fighting for justice.

Because sometimes changing the world starts by simply refusing to accept that exhaustion should ever be the cost of compassion.