

Submitter: Gerald Cohen
On Behalf Of: Oregon Gerontological Association
Committee: House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3838

Dear Chair Grayber, Vice-Chairs Elmer and Muñoz, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Gerald Cohen, I live in Lake Oswego and I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Oregon Gerontological Association (OGA) in support of HB 3838 to establish a Workforce Standards Board in the Long-term Care Industry.

OGA is a nonprofit professional membership organization open to all to improve the lives of older adults and those who support them in Oregon and SW Washington. We envision our region as a vibrant and vital place to age - a region that celebrates age as an asset. We enhance knowledge and cultivate a network of all those involved in the field of aging to improve the lives of older adults and those who support them in Oregon and SW Washington. Our network enables service providers, policy makers, businesses, educators, researchers, students and others to share expertise and best practices to address challenging issues.

For years we had taken pride in the fact that Oregon was a leader in quality, affordable and accessible home and community-based services for the nation. Sadly, the numerous tragedies in various settings and a lack of strong and sustainable investments in the intensive labor demanded upon caregivers has diminished this. Meanwhile, the for-profit industry demands for higher returns on investment have added to disparities in the investments in quality care necessary. The consulting firm Alvarez and Marsal (A&M) just issued a preliminary report on its findings and recommendations as part of a contract with ODHS per the external study demanded by Governor Kotek. While that study focuses upon the internal systems and policy issues of the state agency must address, its underlying theme is one of addressing the quality of care in our home and community based care system.

HB 3838 is a cost-effective solution. High turnover and inadequate training drive up costs in recruitment, emergency care, and unmet care needs. A Workforce Standards Board will help stabilize the workforce by ensuring fair wages, benefits, and training—reducing long-term costs while improving retention and care outcomes. The states of Colorado, Nevada, and Minnesota have all established similar boards for care workers, leading to higher wages, better training, and improved working conditions. To regain leadership in the quality of care, Oregon should likewise follow this example and enact HB 3838.

Thank you for your support.