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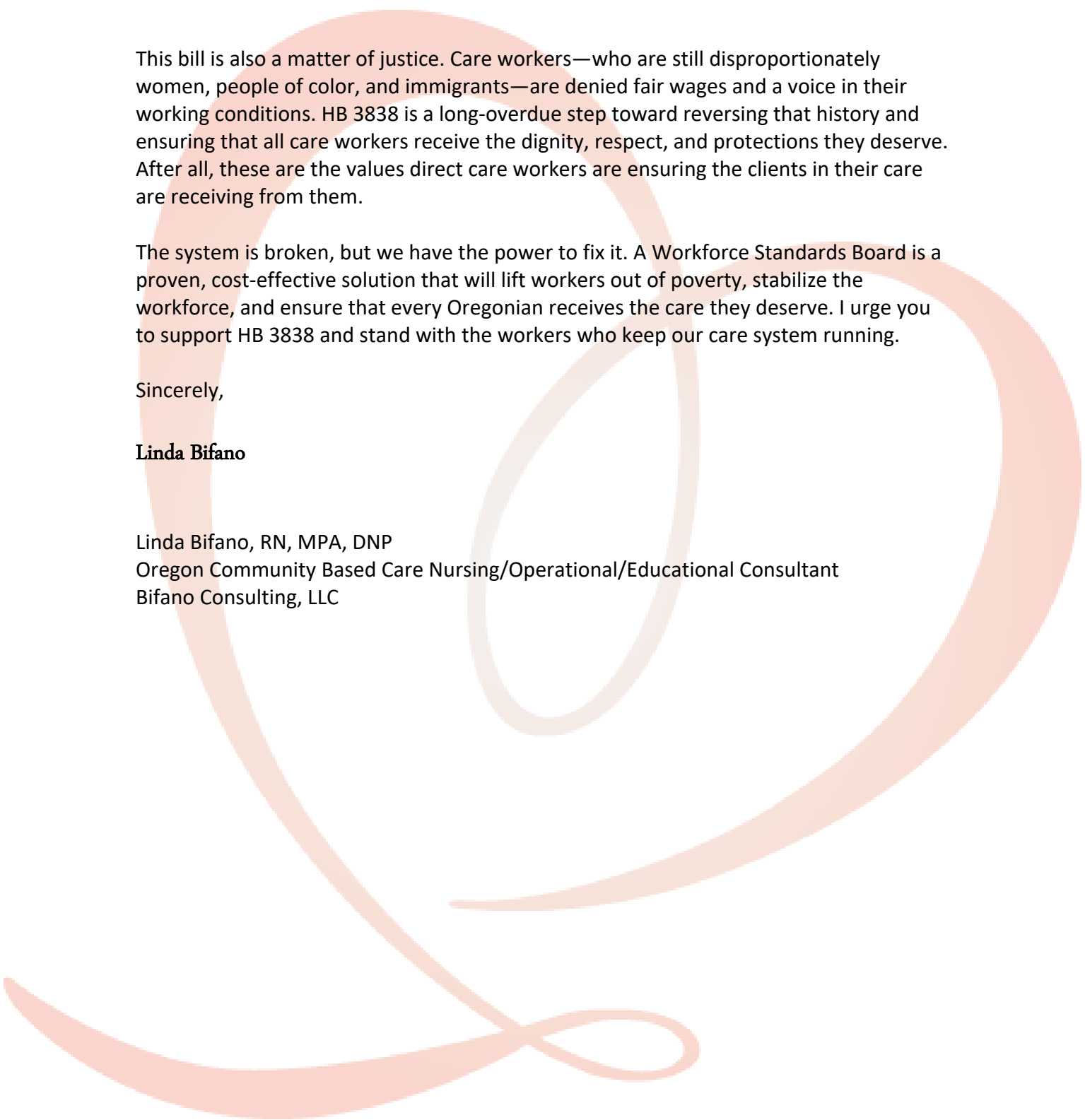
March 17, 2025

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

My name is Linda Bifano and I am a long time Registered Nurse providing care for older and disabled adults across the state of Oregon. As part of my work, I provide consulting services and training to owners, operators and all levels of direct care staff in Oregon's Community Based Care (Adult Foster Care, In-home care, Residential and Assisted Living and Memory Care) Communities I am also a contracted trainer and education curriculum development specialist for Oregon Care Partners, a state funded program to help families and professional caregivers build the knowledge and skills needed to improve the quality of life of older adults and people living with Alzheimer's in Oregon. I have been a member of many rules advisory committees seeking to improve the quality of care and training for caregivers, and in several national funded demonstration projects. I have firsthand knowledge of the inequities direct caregivers experience in their employment relationships. I am providing testimony in strong support of HB 3838 to establish a Workforce Standards Board in the Long-term Care Industry.

For too long, care workers have been treated as disposable, even though they provide essential services to seniors and people with disabilities. Wages are so low that nearly half of direct care workers rely on public assistance just to survive. Many receive no benefits or cannot afford the ones offered. With pay as low as \$15.75 per hour and little job stability, it's no surprise that the industry faces a 51% turnover rate. Benefits such as health insurance with high premium costs do not afford direct care workers the ability to insure all their family members. Moreover, many direct care workers need more than one or two jobs just to make ends meet. This level of instability is unsustainable. Oregon needs 65,000 more care providers by 2030, yet we cannot recruit or retain the workforce we have now. Without immediate action, we will see even more Oregonians go without the care they need.

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 stabilize the workforce by ensuring fair wages, benefits, and training—reducing long-term costs while improving retention and care outcomes. We have seen this approach succeed in other states, such as Colorado, Nevada, and Minnesota.



This bill is also a matter of justice. Care workers—who are still disproportionately women, people of color, and immigrants—are denied fair wages and a voice in their working conditions. HB 3838 is a long-overdue step toward reversing that history and ensuring that all care workers receive the dignity, respect, and protections they deserve. After all, these are the values direct care workers are ensuring the clients in their care are receiving from them.

The system is broken, but we have the power to fix it. A Workforce Standards Board is a proven, cost-effective solution that will lift workers out of poverty, stabilize the workforce, and ensure that every Oregonian receives the care they deserve. I urge you to support HB 3838 and stand with the workers who keep our care system running.

Sincerely,

Linda Bifano

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