



March 17, 2025

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

My name is Ira Cuello-Martinez and I am providing testimony on behalf of PCUN, Oregon's farmworker union. We are in strong support of HB 3838 to establish a workforce standards board for long-term care workers.

Similar to farmworkers, domestic workers have been excluded from many labor protections since the 1930s. Care workers are mostly women, people of color, and immigrants and they are denied fair wages and a voice in their working conditions. Establishing a workforce standards board is a long-overdue step toward reversing this history and ensuring that all care workers receive the dignity, respect, and protections they deserve.

Oregon's long-term care system is struggling with serious issues that directly impact the quality of care for people who rely on it and those who care for them. 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. Oregon needs 65,000 more care providers by 2030, yet we cannot recruit or retain the workforce we have now.

HB 3838 will address the urgent challenges facing Oregon's direct care workforce, ensuring a sustainable, high-quality care system that meets the needs of our most vulnerable residents. Care workers provide essential care to older adults and individuals with disabilities, enabling them to live with dignity and independence in their own homes.

A workforce standards board is a proven solution that will lift workers out of poverty, stabilize the workforce, and ensure that every Oregonian receives the care they deserve. We have seen this approach succeed in other states. Colorado, Nevada, and Minnesota have all established similar boards for care workers, leading to higher wages, better training, and improved working conditions.

I urge you to support HB 3838 and stand with the workers who keep our care system running.

Thank you.

Ira Cuello-Martinez  
Policy Advocacy Director  
PCUN