

Submitter: Patricia Verduzco
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3838

Chair Bowman, Vice-Chairs Drazan and Pham, and Members of the House Committee on Rules,

My name is Patti Verduzco, I live in Cascade Locks and I am providing testimony in strong support of HB 3838-3 to establish a Workforce Standards Board in the Long-term Care Industry.

The care industry is broken. Care workers are underpaid, overworked, and denied the basic job protections that other essential workers receive. This has resulted in a crisis in care—one that is harming workers and putting vulnerable Oregonians at risk. HB 3838-3 provides a proven solution: a Workforce Standards Board that will set industry-wide standards to improve wages, working conditions, and care quality.

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. 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 3838-3 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. Colorado, Nevada, and Minnesota have all established similar boards for care workers, leading to higher wages, better training, and improved working conditions. Other sectors have successfully adopted this model as well, from fast food workers in California to domestic workers in Seattle to Nursing Home care workers in Minnesota.

This bill is also a matter of justice. When federal labor laws were written in 1938, domestic workers—who were overwhelmingly Black women—were deliberately excluded from labor protections to preserve racial and economic hierarchies. Those exclusions have never been fully corrected. Today, care workers—who are still disproportionately women, people of color, and immigrants—are denied fair wages

and a voice in their working conditions. HB 3838-3 is a long-overdue step toward reversing that history and ensuring that all care workers receive the dignity, respect, and protections they deserve.

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 3838-3 and stand with the workers who keep our care system running.

Sincerely,

Patti Verduzco
Cascade Locks, Oregon