



# Cornerstone Associates

*In business to make a difference*

To: Chair Grayber, Vice Chairs Elmer and Muñoz, and Members of the House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards

From: Kenneth Smith, Executive Director, Cornerstone Associates Inc.

RE: Oppose HB 3838, please!

Dear Committee,

A Workforce Standards Board is not the needed solution to the wage issues for direct care workers and direct service professionals. It is an oversight board that will create more expenses than the wage & benefit issues it would be charged to solve.

For example, what was the collective cost of the Colorado Direct Care Workforce Stabilization Board established in 2023 to use 2024 to set a wage increase to \$25/HR by 2026? While data-based decisions are important, we all know that the direct care wages need to be \$25/HR for trained direct service professionals. Same is true in Oregon, no workforce standards board expenses are needed to cloud the understanding that the rate model developed for services is not sufficient to pay adequate wages and benefits.

The workforce does not need to debate standards, the standards are obviously clear; we need higher wages, better benefits, and career advancement payment tiers. The providers want to pay higher wages, we need to pay higher wages to retain a strong and capable workforce, and we will pay higher wages and benefits with a corrected rate model. Fix the rate model to include cost of living increases and merit advancement and that will improve the pay.

Cornerstone Associates is opposed to this bill, and I urge this committee to focus your legislative energies on the root cause of low rates and not create inflated oversight to do that.

Sincerely,