



*Testimony in support of HB 3838 (2025)*

Chair Grayber, Vice Chairs Elmer and Muñoz, and members of the Committee,

My name is Kate Suisman. I am an attorney at the Northwest Workers' Justice Project (NWJP). Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important bill. We represent workers in low-wage jobs when bad things happen to them at work: when they are not paid, or are discriminated against for being in a protected class or are retaliated against for speaking up. Finally, we engage in policy advocacy and try to bring the important perspectives of workers in low-wage jobs and immigrant workers to these policy discussions.

I write in strong support of the establishment of a Workforce Standards Board in the Long-term Care Industry. We support this idea both because workers need higher workplace standards and the industry is in great need of more workers.

Most of us know that care workers are generally underpaid, which is an unfortunate reflection of the value we place as a culture on this extremely important work. It is contrary to everything we believe in as a culture that someone can work full-time or more, and not make enough to get by. Half of direct care workers need to receive public assistance to meet their basic needs, on top of their important and draining work. When we see high turnover in industries and constant worker shortages, we know we need to do something to create a more desirable industry. That is exactly the case here.

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 Oregon farmworkers fighting for fair labor standards.

As we have discussed many times in this committee, federal labor laws from the 1930s- both the Fair Labor Standards Act and the National Labor Relations Act- contained racist exclusions of certain workers, namely farm and domestic workers. We are slowly working to correct this historic injustice, and HB 3838 is an important step towards justice.

Please support this important and well thought-out bill. Thank you.