

Submitter: Joy'e Willman

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1505

Chair Jama, Vice Chair Starr, members of the committee—thank you for the opportunity to be here today in support of SB 1505

My name is Joy'e Willman. I'm the Vice President of SEIU Local 503's care sector, and I'm also a longtime member leader in our union. I'm here because I've seen firsthand how the current system is failing the workers who provide care and support, and the people and families who rely on that care.

When we talk about a workforce standards board, I want to start by explaining what it is in plain language. A workforce standards board is a place where workers, employers, people who receive services, and the state all come together to set basic, minimum standards across the system.

In DD services, where I have worked for decades, workers often do very similar work but are treated very differently depending on the employer, the program, or the setting. A standards board helps set a consistent floor—so workers aren't forced to leave jobs they love just to earn a livable wage somewhere else.

This isn't about one employer or one program. It's about fixing a system that is fragmented and unstable. Right now, that instability leads to constant turnover, staffing shortages, and disrupted services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

A workforce standards board is especially important in this field because traditional organizing tools don't work well here. DD workers are spread across small group homes, individual homes, and community settings. There's no single workplace, and that makes it incredibly hard to raise standards one job at a time.

I want to share an example of a system failure related to benefits at private agencies. Through our union, homecare and personal support workers have fought hard for high quality health benefits. Year after year, we have prioritized making the health plan strong and with low barriers to entry. In recent years, we have seen several examples of private agencies coaching their employees to maintain a couple of hours as a PSW to maintain eligibility for state benefits, even though our state Medicaid reimbursement rates are supposed to be able to support quality health insurance for all DD workers. At the same time, we see some companies struggle to make ends meet, while others book massive profits off dd services.

A workforce standards board approach allows us to raise standards across the entire system, instead of patching problems one employer or group home at a time. For example, the board could require minimum expectations of what health insurance is offered, which doesn't exist now.

I also want to address a few things this bill is not.

It is not a wage mandate. The board does not automatically raise wages. Any recommendations that require funding still come back to the legislature for approval.

It does not create a new state agency. The board uses existing agencies and systems to do this work.

And it does not give the state new enforcement powers. Agencies already have the authority to enforce standards—this bill gives them clearer, more consistent standards to work from.

In DD services, we all know what happens when jobs don't pay enough or lack support. Workers leave. Families scramble. People lose trusted workers. And the system becomes more fragile every year.

A workforce standards board is a practical way to bring stability to DD services by bringing everyone to the table, setting clear expectations, and fixing the system.

That's why I'm here today, and why our members are here with me. We're asking you to move this bill forward so we can build a DD service system that works—for workers, employers, families, and the people we support.

Thank you for the opportunity to present today. Please Support SB 1505