

Minutes: Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board

Date: Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026

Minutes prepared by: Linnea Pignatello

Location: Hybrid – Minnesota Room at the Department of Labor and Industry and via Webex

Attendance

Members present

Jason Anderson (remotely)

Michelle Armstrong

Kim Brenne

Michele Fredrickson

Jamie Gulley

Sarah Grebenc

Paula Rocheleau

Mary Swanson (remotely)

Visitors present

Todd Bergstrom

Jeff Bostic

John Duerschel

Johnathan Lips

Chad McKenna

Kayla Revier

Nate Schema

Lillian VanDerPol

DLI staff members present

Linnea Pignatello

Paul Enger

Ken McGurran

Josiah Moore

Leah Solo

Agenda items

1. **Call to order** – The meeting was called to order by Chair Jamie Gulley at 11:02 a.m. Roll call was taken and a quorum was declared.

2. **Approval of agenda** – A motion to approve the agenda as presented was made by Michelle Armstrong and seconded by Kim Brenne. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.
3. **Approval of drafted meeting minutes** – A motion to approve the July 9, 2026, drafted meeting minutes as presented was made by Armstrong and seconded by Brenne. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.
4. **Board updates** –
 - a. Chair Gulley recognized Commissioner Kate Perushek’s appointment to the board and, while she was unable to attend this meeting, she will be welcomed at the next meeting.
 - b. Leah Solo gave a survey update: One final review is planned to ensure consistency and may need to be updated with the newly approved state plan amendment (SPA) information. The survey is based on Formstack and there were edits from many different Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) work units, including Research and Data Analytics, and Communications.
 - c. Solo updated the board about wage-supplement implementation, including that the Department of Human Services (DHS) expects a request for proposals later this fall. The full implementation is targeted for calendar-year 2027.
 - Executive Director Solo informed the board the SPA has been approved and the new minimum-wage rates (\$19, \$22.50, \$23.50 and \$27) become effective Sept. 10, 2026. DHS will issue official SPA materials later and Brenne explained rate notices can now be processed, with an anticipated delivery to facilities within one to two weeks. DLI will send email notices to members of the public who have signed up to receive updates from the Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board. The SPA includes retroactive rate increases to Jan. 1, 2026, for employers, but the statutes and rules do not require retroactive pay for workers – retroactivity for workers must be voluntary. Board members acknowledged the extremely lengthy SPA process, which took more than two years.
 - d. One portion of the SPA with rates requires clarification, so the board will not be finalizing the curriculum today. The board reviewed updates related to accessibility and compliance, including a Microsoft Forms version for applicants who want to complete the application online. There is also a Word document version available for applicants to print and complete, then scan and return (fillable PDFs are not screen reader accessible). One change to the application for certified worker organizations is that under the data policies section, an item to agree to will be to require worker organizations to retain training and attendance records for five years for verification purposes. Paul Enger said the renewal period needs to open 30 days within standards being updated (Sept. 10, 2026). A motion to approve the application for renewal for certified worker organizations was made by Armstrong and seconded by Brenne. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.
 - Solo updated the board about the Certification, Training and Public Engagement Workgroup by first stating there was no meeting, but public engagement locations and dates are proposed as follows: Rochester at Century High School (chosen for better parking and evening availability); Brainerd at Brainerd Public Library; and St. Paul in the Minnesota Room at DLI (a hybrid option). The proposed dates are: Rochester, Monday, Sept. 14; Brainerd, Wednesday, Sept. 16; and St. Paul, Tuesday, Sept. 22. Board members signed up for attendance to ensure at least one worker, employer and state representative at each event.

- Solo updated the board about the Data and Waiver Workgroup, saying there was no meeting and anticipated data is arriving later in August and should be available to review and discuss at the next meeting, set for Aug. 31. Solo said there were no waiver requests yet, but the group remains prepared to meet before Sept. 10 if waiver requests emerge.

5. New business –

- a. The board discussed continuous standards review, which the board must engage in every two years.
 - Executive Director Solo presented her memo *Connecting health and welfare to retirement savings*, which analyzed if retirement savings are important for the health and welfare of nursing home workers. Solo explained cost-of-living numbers as reported by the Department of Employment and Economic Development, different types of retirement accounts, percentages of households that participate in retirement plans, the number of participants when automatic enrollment occurs, and the connection between retirement savings and mental health. Solo discussed the previous month's memo that highlighted the number of publicly available job postings that advertise retirement contributions or participation as a benefit of employment.
- b. Gulley presented two proposals related to retirement, revised from the previous month's proposals. Gulley stressed these are proposals and are meant to generate conversation and discussion and to ensure nursing home workers are not retiring into poverty. Option four is a phased-in version of option three, which, in short will mandate employers:
 - i. contribute an amount equivalent to at least 3% of each employee's gross earnings to a defined benefit plan in which the employee is a participant;
 - ii. contribute an amount equivalent to at least 4.5% of each employee's gross earnings to a defined contribution plan in which the employee is a participant; or
 - iii. provide each employee an amount equivalent to 6% of the employee's gross earnings as a cash supplement.
- c. Some topics of discussion were: an Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) pre-emption; cash in lieu of a retirement plan and how it may solve ERISA concerns; funding of the proposals; rulemaking power of the board; rate caps; challenges for DHS to run a fiscal analysis for the cash option; data collection; and legal review about the possible conflict with ERISA.
- d. The board was encouraged to review the proposals again before the next meeting and bring forward any additions, revisions, data sets or relevant information to the September meeting. Additional proposals were solicited as well.

6. Next meeting – The next meeting is at 11 a.m., Thursday, Sept. 10, in the Minnesota Room.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Michele Fredrickson to adjourn the meeting at 12:09 p.m. and seconded by Paula Rocheleau. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.