DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRY

Minutes: Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board

Date: Thursday, Sept. 10, 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
Commissioner Kate Perushek
Kim Brenne
Michele Fredrickson
Jamie Gulley
Sarah Grebenc
Paula Rocheleau
Mary Swanson (remotely)

Visitors present

Todd Bergstrom (remotely)
Jeff Bostic
Luke Boudewyn
Jane Kolar
Jonathan Lips (remotely)
Blois Olson
Toby Pearson
Kayla Revier (remotely)
Kari Thurlow
Guest

DLI staff members present

Linnea Pignatello
Paul Enger
Ken McGurran
Leah Solo

Agenda items

1. **Call to order** – The meeting was called to order by chair Jamie Gulley at 11:03 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 Aug. 13, 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** –
    - Chair Gulley acknowledged the news conference earlier in the day, acknowledging that today – Sept. 10, 2026 – marks the official implementation date for the new minimum-wage standards. Leah Solo followed up with notes about outreach regarding the standards: individual outreach to each administrator has been conducted to ensure they received wage implementation details, forum information and the survey.
    - Solo explained she received a complaint Aug. 20 related to a certified worker organization (CWO). The initial information from the facility and the CWO's responses were received but Executive Director Solo requested additional clarification from the CWO and has not received that yet. As of this meeting, Executive Director Solo has not completed her investigation of the CWO complaint and is not ready to share a recommendation.
    - Solo updated the board regarding the Certification, Training and Public Engagement Workgroup.
        - Updated training materials, including the sample presentation, training guide and notice template, were reviewed and the workgroup felt this board meeting was appropriate for a vote on whether to approve the documents.
            - Armstrong made a motion to approve the training guide and sample curriculum as presented. The motion was seconded by Brenne. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.
            - Paul Enger noted the notice template needed to be voted on. Brenne made a motion to approve the posting notice template and the motion was seconded by Sarah Grebenc. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.
        - Solo informed the board there are new formats for certified worker organizations to apply, but no substantive changes were made. The board discussed whether renewal applications should ask CWO applicants about complaints. It was noted that revocation procedures exist for addressing substantiated complaints. Brenne suggested the board add a line for typed name on the signature page. A motion was made by Brenne and seconded by Armstrong to approve the renewal application with the addition of a typed-signature line. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.
        - Solo updated the board about the coming public forums. She informed board members the workgroup is suggesting asking questions in a "book club" style to facilitate deeper discussion while avoiding the risk of board members appearing to speak on behalf of the full board. Example questions include the impact of holiday pay standards, minimum wage effects on recruitment and retention, needs for future standards and facility benefits used for retention.

- Solo updated the board regarding the Data and Wavier Workgroup. She shared about the data tracking options and updated the group with retention, pool data, wages (Bureau of Labor Statistics and cost reports), closures and active beds. The current data (mostly from 2024 through 2025) is too early to reflect the impact of the newly implemented standards. Solo explained the board has received four applications for waivers and variances from the minimum-wage standards. Applicants one, two and three are related, in that they claim they applied for a rate add-on, but the Department of Human Services (DHS) either did not receive or process their applications. DHS confirmed some facilities applied incorrectly and noted it can extend deadlines under statute. DHS expects a decision to be made about these three rate add-on applications before the next board meeting. The board discussed these complexities, including whether waivers should be temporary pending DHS decisions and that workers are expecting minimum-wage increases to begin today. After much discussion, Brenne made a motion to grant a two-week waiver from the minimum-wage standards to the three facilities that submitted their applications with uncertainty around their rate add-on. Grebenc seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously. The board and workgroup will reconvene within two weeks to review complete applications and discuss DHS determinations.

5. **New business –**
   - The board heard testimony from Toby Pearson, president and CEO of Care Providers Minnesota. Pearson described Care Providers' commitment to working together to improve care in Minnesota and noted his central request to the board is "Evaluate before you expand." Pearson asked the board to determine whether the current standards are achieving the desired outcomes. He asked to establish a regular, clear review of the existing standards before developing new ones. Pearson emphasized reimbursement timing, Medicaid funding, compression, rural staffing and case mix changes. Pearson called on the board to refrain from using its expedited rulemaking powers and return to standard rulemaking procedures.
   - The board heard testimony from Kari Thurlow, president and CEO of LeadingAge Minnesota. Thurlow remarked on the board's discussion of retirement benefits, stating the board must collect essential data and information regarding how many nursing home employees are eligible for retirement plans, how many currently participate, what workers want regarding retirement benefits and more. Thurlow said any new standard must be evaluated alongside Minnesota's complex nursing home reimbursement system. Thurlow also raised concerns about the certified worker organizations and called for stronger evaluation and accountability – including capacity, geographic reach and language access – ensuring CWOs serve both union and non-union facilities, and addressing reports from employers about the training occurring in their facilities.
   - The board discussed the retirement proposal dated Sept. 10, 2026, as presented by Gulley. Key discussion points included a cash-in-lieu option, required under ERISA (to avoid preemption), ensuring no employer is forced to create a new retirement plan, workers being provided retirement plan information when receiving a lump sum, contracted workers and their inclusion in the standards, and other complications such as facility change of ownership.
6. **Next meeting** – The next meeting is Thursday, Oct. 8, 2026.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Brenne to adjourn the meeting at 1:03 p.m. and seconded by Grebenc. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.