

Minutes: Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board

Date: Thursday, Dec. 11, 2025

Minutes prepared by: Linnea Pignatello

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

Attendance

Members present	Visitors present	DLI staff members present
Michelle Armstrong	Maisie Blaine (remotely)	Linnea Becerra
Commissioner Nicole Blissenbach (joined at 11:08 a.m.)	Matthew Blake	Paul Enger
Kim Brenne	Jeff Bostic	James Honerman
Jamie Gulley	Todd Bergstrom	Ken McGurran
Maria King (remotely)	Kristy Graume (Department of Human Services)	Josiah Moore (remotely)
Katie Lundmark	Jonathan Lips (remotely)	Leah Solo
Paula Rocheleau (remotely)	Meghan Raftery (Department of Human Services)	
Mary Swanson (remotely)	Kayla Revier (remotely)	
	Jamie Thom (remotely)	

Agenda items

- **Call to order** – Before the meeting was called to order by Jamie Gulley, he shared a short comment about the federal approval delay. Gulley expressed his disappointment at the wages not being effective by Jan. 1, 2026, due to this delay and that workers and their families were looking forward to this increase and what it could do for the industry and the patients. Gulley thanked the board, staff members at both the Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) and at the Department of Human Services (DHS), and stakeholders in the industry for their work and patience at this time. The meeting was called to order at 11:03 a.m. Roll call was taken. A quorum was declared.
- 1. **Approval of agenda** – A motion to approve the agenda as presented was made by Paula Rocheleau and seconded by Michelle Armstrong. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.
- 2. **Approval of drafted meeting minutes** – A motion to approve the Nov. 21, 2025, drafted meeting minutes as presented was made by Rocheleau and seconded by Armstrong. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.
- 3. **Board updates** –
 - A motion to approve all the minutes taken at the public forums was made by Armstrong and seconded by Maria King. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.
 - Leah Solo reported she heard the conversation about the annual report and edited the report. Solo caught one typo after its submission, so it has been edited again and resubmitted to the legislative library. The annual report was submitted by its statutory deadline of Dec. 1, 2025.

- Solo updated the board about the communication regarding the minimum-wage effective dates. An email message was sent Friday, Dec. 5, which clarified although it was previously stated minimum wages would go into effect Jan. 1, 2026, at the earliest, they will now be effective 30 days after federal approval. This information was communicated via GovDelivery, the Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board webpage was updated and Solo sent email messages to the administrator list she had called last month.
- Solo summarized the public forums of the past two months. She thanked the board for doing them, noted it is important work and reported 138 people attended the forums. Solo also called 295 nursing home administrators and sent follow up email messages to each administrator. Solo highlighted additional email messages the Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board received and testimony submitted in writing. The board reflected on the forums, including topics such as comparing employee and employer participation, diversity among attendees, representative sample of employers, forum time of day, forum time of year, and online versus in-person forums. Some board members expressed their opinion that people might not be attending because they are not discontent with their jobs or because they feel it is hard to speak in front of other people. Some ideas for future forums are to solicit comments in writing, such as: via a survey; using a QR code to submit feedback; having an open-ended survey that can be taken all year; using registration email addresses to follow up and ask for feedback; having a method for the board to respond to what was said; having standard ground rules for board members at the forums; determining how to target the right audience for attendance; incorporating a facilitator to ask followup questions; sending a thank you message for attending or registering, with a followup survey; and implementing strict ground rules for speakers.
- Solo asked the board members to share some of the feedback they heard. Katie Lundmark shared three main comments: compression from tenured workers; compression from other age groups that are getting wages that don't reflect experience; and funding for wages is unfunded. Rocheleau noted that people asked how the board is measuring success. Commissioner Nicole Blissenbach added the rising cost of health insurance and retention rates, and asked "do there need to be more delineations of job classifications?" Mary Swanson reiterated the compression issue and Gulley said the values-based reimbursement system allows for employers to raise wages to address the compression issue. Gulley also relayed that workers want recognition in the standards of their existence, for example social workers, cooks, etc.
 - Updates about workgroups:
 - There were no updates for the Certification/Training Workgroup.
- Swanson asked if the Certification/Training Workgroup can report to the board about how many training sessions there have been and how many workers have been trained.
 - There were no updates about the Data Workgroup.
 - There were no updates about the Public Hearings Workgroup.
 - There were no updates about the Waivers and Variances Workgroup.
 - There were no updates about the Waiver Review Workgroup because no applications have been submitted since the previous meeting.
- Kim Brenne said DHS sent the preliminary rate increases Dec. 10, which are also pending federal approval. Brenne reported that funds requested so far did not exceed what had been appropriated by the Legislature. Retroactively, when federal approval is obtained, rate increases will be effective

Jan. 1, despite standards going into effect 30 days after federal approval (Minnesota Rules 5200.2070 and Minnesota Statutes 181.213, subdivision 2b(a) provides implementation of rate increases are available for the rate year beginning Jan. 1, 2026). It was also discussed that facilities may choose to bill private-pay residents at the estimated new rates starting in January 2026.

- Solo reported on a certified worker organization (CWO) complaint for the AFL-CIO and its ability to train workers virtually. Solo wrote a memo, and then summarized that memo for the board, in which she concluded the revocation of the CWO certification would not be appropriate. Solo recommended that materials that discuss the AFL-CIO will be updated to reflect the availability of AFL-CIO to train virtually and in person. A motion was made by Brenne to approve Executive Director Solo's report and her recommendation. The motion was seconded by King. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.
- Kristy Graume, DHS director of state government relations, spoke to the board about the State Plan Amendment (SPA) DHS is required to submit to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for approval before the minimum wages and rate increases would be effective. The SPA was posted for public comment and will be live for 30 days; DHS then summarizes the comments and submits the proposal to CMS. There are then 90 days for CMS to review and approve or deny the SPA. DHS plans to work with counterparts at CMS in hopes of moving the process along quickly. If approved, the minimum wages will go into effect 30 days after approval. After approval, the rate increases will go into effect retroactively to Jan. 1. DHS usually knows ahead of time if something is not going to be approved. If there is no CMS approval, DHS would notify the Legislature and then the rate increase would not go into effect, meaning the wage increases also would not go into effect. It was confirmed the statutes do not require retroactive pay increases for workers, even if nursing homes receive retroactive rate increases. Graume discussed considerations moving forward and the DHS process for submitting SPAs in the future. Discussion led to a consensus to not send additional information about the SPA, rates or the approval process until after the next meeting. Swanson and Gulley asked Graume for feedback about the process and how the board can avoid this delay in the future. Graume suggested clarifying the statutory language, but did say the team at DHS did not understand the deadline of Dec. 1, 2025, for the minimum wages to go into effect Jan. 1. DHS pays rates, not wages, and has learned from this process, which will lead to a change in its processes and will reduce the risk of something like this happening again. Graume did note that adding language explicitly calling out the retroactivity of the wages, if the rates are retroactive, could be something for the board to consider. Gulley suggested writing the retroactivity in rules rather than statute, but there was not a clear answer or decision about this, because staff members will need to research whether such an action is within the board's rulemaking authority. Communication to the public about the situation was discussed and the board concluded that stating the wages will go into effect 30 days after federal approval was sufficient for now. The board decided to discuss further communication more at the next meeting.

4. New business –

5. Next meeting –

Adjournment

A motion was made by Lundmark to adjourn the meeting at 1:01 p.m. and seconded by Blissenbach. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.