

March 5, 2025

Chair Dave Baker  
2nd Floor Centennial Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Baker:

As unions that represent nursing home workers across the state, we write to oppose HF500 which would cripple the Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board. The nursing home sector faces a workforce crisis that long pre-dates the COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis will not be solved unless we provide for a broad-based increase in basic wages and benefits. By setting industry wide minimum wages, the Board is already taking steps to lift worker wages and draw more workers into the industry. The legislature should not put these hard won gains at risk.

Higher wages and benefits like these only happen when we give workers a seat at the table and the ability to help set minimum standards for their industry. We think this crisis has been caused in part by the lack of adequate opportunities for workers to have a say in setting industry workforce standards. In 2022, the Minnesota AFL-CIO adopted a convention resolution in support of Labor Standards Boards. By establishing the Board, Minnesota took a nationally recognized role to give more workers a greater voice over their standards of work.

Members from all of our unions joined non-union nursing home workers in the robust public input process that the Board used to adopt its new standards. Workers around the state spoke out for the minimum wages that this bill would eliminate.

We appreciate the Author's amendment in Human Services. It eliminated language to repeal the Board, but we still oppose the new language because it saddles the Board with an unworkable and unsustainable funding requirement. The bill requires the Board to pay for a rule twice, first through the forecasted growth in VBR and, second, through the additional up-front add-on rate mandated by HF500. New wages do not necessarily require upfront money. Under VBR, nursing homes give raises, sometimes large raises, all of the time without requiring such an additional up-front funding mechanism.

HF500 is also poorly targeted. This bill will do the most to help homes that have done the least to raise wages. It does the least to help those homes that have tried to do the right thing by investing in workers.

Minnesota has taken a tremendous step to give all nursing home workers a voice on the job and the power to set this industry wide minimum wage. The funding in the Governor's budget is sufficient for that goal, but the legislature may, even in these challenging fiscal times, want to go further. To get the best value for taxpayer dollars we encourage the legislature to consider ways to better target such additional funds. This can be done biennially for each new rule and there is no need to change the underlying statute.

Sincerely yours,

AFSCME Council 5  
AFSCME Council 65  
SEIU Healthcare MN & IA  
UFCW Local 1189  
USW District 11