



---

# **Minnesota Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board annual report**

Report to the Minnesota Legislature

Dec. 1, 2025

## Contact information

Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board  
Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry  
443 Lafayette Road N.  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
Phone: 651-284-5076  
Email: [leah.solo@state.mn.us](mailto:leah.solo@state.mn.us)  
Web: [dli.mn.gov](http://dli.mn.gov)

As requested by Minnesota Statutes 3.197: This report cost approximately \$1,666.81 to prepare, including staff time, printing and mailing expenses.

*Upon request, this material will be made available in an alternative format such as audio, Braille or large print.  
Printed on recycled paper.*

Contents

Minnesota Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board annual report.....1

    Background.....4

        Governing statute and history.....4

        Board composition .....4

        Board meetings.....6

Status update: Implementing rules, planning ahead .....6

    Wage standards rules .....7

    Holiday pay, posting requirements and certifying worker organizations rules .....7

    Curriculum and certification.....9

    Waivers and Variances .....9

    Review of standards ..... 10

Workgroups ..... 10

Outreach..... 13

Conclusion ..... 16

## Background

### Governing statute and history

The Minnesota Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board (NHWSB) Act was passed as part of the Omnibus Jobs, Economic Development, Labor and Industry appropriations bill, SF 3035, 2023 Session Law Chapter 53 and codified in Minnesota Statutes sections 181.211 to 181.217. The NHWSB Act established a board with the duty and authority to set compensation standards for nursing home workers that are reasonably necessary and appropriate to protect the health and welfare of nursing home workers, to ensure nursing home workers are trained on these standards and to enact other rules the NHWSB determines are necessary and appropriate to protect the health and welfare of nursing home workers.

The NHWSB Act provides guidance on how the NHWSB should conduct its work, including gathering data, reviewing collective bargaining agreements and hearing testimony from workers and employers. It also directs NHWSB to create a certification process for worker organizations to train nursing home workers about the standards developed by the board and draft a curriculum to guide the worker organizations' training.

During the first special session of 2025, the Legislature amended the definition of nursing home and nursing home employer to align with each other and the definition of nursing home worker.<sup>1</sup> The Legislature also amended the NHWSB Act to state that while the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) rate limits were in place for nursing homes, standards that met the threshold of needing an appropriation would have that appropriation be paid to nursing homes upfront in accordance with a new section of statute — Minn. Stat. section 256R.495.<sup>2</sup>

Per Minn. Stat. section 181.212, subdivision 11, the executive director must submit an annual report by Dec. 1 each year “to the chairs and ranking minority members of the house of representatives and senate committees with jurisdiction over labor and human services on any actions taken and any standards adopted by the board.”

### Board composition

NHWSB is composed of: the commissioners or commissioner designees from the Minnesota departments of Labor and Industry (DLI), Human Services (DHS) and Health (MDH); three members who represent nursing home employers or employer organizations; and three members who represent nursing home workers or worker organizations. The latter six board members are appointed by the governor in accordance with Minn. Stat. section 15.066. Additionally, the NHWSB Act directs the governor to consider geographic distribution of nursing homes when appointing the employer representatives.

#### Commissioner or commissioner designee members

---

<sup>1</sup>[Chapter 6 – MN Laws](#), article 5, sec. 7 and sec. 8.

<sup>2</sup>[Chapter 9 – MN Laws](#), article 1, sec. 1, 2, 3, 17, 23.

<b>Nicole Blissenbach</b> Commissioner Department of Labor and Industry	<b>Kim Brenne</b> Director of Nursing Facility Rates and Audits Department of Human Services
<b>Maria King</b> Director of Health Regulation Division Department of Health	

Members representing nursing home employers or employer organizations	
<b>Paula Rocheleau</b> President/CEO Partners Senior Living Options, LLC Royalton, Minnesota Term end: Jan. 1, 2027	<b>Mary Swanson</b> Administrator Good Samaritan-Westbrook Westbrook, Minnesota Term end: Jan. 1, 2029
<b>Katie Lundmark</b> Vice President of Operations, Senior Living Division Lifespark St. Louis Park, Minnesota Term end: Jan. 5, 2026	

Members representing nursing home workers or worker organizations	
<b>Jamie Gulley – chair</b> President SEIU Healthcare Minnesota and Iowa St. Paul, Minnesota Term end: Jan. 5, 2026	<b>Michele Fredrickson</b> Licensed Practical Nurse and Staff Representative United Steelworkers Eveleth, Minnesota Term end: Jan. 1, 2029
<b>Michelle Armstrong</b> Licensed Practical Nurse, United Food and Commercial Workers 1189 St. Paul, Minnesota Term end: Jan. 4, 2027	

## Board support

NHWSB is supported by DLI staff members, including an executive director. Leah Solo was hired as the executive director and began her work Aug. 21, 2023. Additionally, DLI staff members provide administrative, technical, communications and legal support to the board.

## Board meetings

NHWSB has been meeting at least monthly since its initial meeting Sept. 14, 2023. Since the most recent report, the full board has met 12 times and workgroups have met 24 times. Agendas, meeting minutes and meeting dates are online at [dli.mn.gov/about-department/boards-and-councils/nursing-home-workforce-standards-board](https://dli.mn.gov/about-department/boards-and-councils/nursing-home-workforce-standards-board).

## Status update: Implementing rules, planning ahead

The NHWSB Act directed the board to “adopt rules establishing initial standards for wages for nursing home workers”<sup>3</sup> and, unless the initial wage standards required appropriation from the Legislature, the initial standards are to take effect by Jan. 1, 2025.<sup>4</sup>

This work has resulted in two sets of standards that proceeded through rulemaking. The initial minimum-wage standards required an appropriation from the state Legislature, which was allocated in the 2025 Special Session and is awaiting federal approval. That set of rules will have an implementation date of either Jan. 1, 2026, or 30 days after federal approval, whichever is later. The second set of rules relating to holiday pay, certification of worker organizations and posting requirements did not require an appropriation from the state Legislature and went into effect Jan. 1, 2025.

Rule set	Initial vote by board	Notice of intent to adopt published	Approved by Court of Administrative Hearings	Vote by board for final adoption	Notice of adoption	Implementation
Initial minimum-wage standards; 5200.2060-5200.2090	June 13, 2024	June 24, 2024	Sept. 20, 2024	Oct. 2, 2024	Oct. 28, 2024	Jan. 1, 2026, or 30 days after federal approval
Initial holiday pay standards, certification of worker organizations, posting requirements; 5200.2000-5200.2050	Aug. 8, 2024	Aug. 26, 2024	Oct. 31, 2024	Nov. 7, 2024	Dec. 9, 2024	Jan. 1, 2025

---

<sup>3</sup>Minn. Stat. section 181.213, subd. 1(a).

<sup>4</sup>Minn. Stat. section 181.214, subd. 2(a).

## Wage standards rules

After five public hearings, as well as a review of responses to questionnaires, NHWSB met eight times to discuss proposals for initial wage standards. Discussion included consideration of occupations and geography, as well as funding and factors external to the board. A major point of discussion was meeting the majority benchmark as laid out in Minn. Stat. section 181.213, subd. 2(a).<sup>5</sup>

Ultimately, the board decided on the minimum wages below, with six board members voting in favor and three abstaining from the vote.

Occupation	Jan. 1, 2026, minimum hourly wage	Jan. 1, 2027, minimum hourly wage
General minimum wage	\$19.00	\$20.50
Certified nursing assistant wage	\$22.50	\$24.00
Trained medical assistant wage	\$23.50	\$25.00
Licensed practical nurse wage	\$27.00	\$28.50

In considering costs, it was determined the minimum wages set by the board would require an appropriation from the state Legislature. Per statute, the board needed to analyze the fiscal impact of a proposed minimum-wage standard.<sup>6</sup> As part of its market investigations, the board explored “the impact of [wage and benefit increases on] nursing home operating payment rates determined pursuant to section 256R.21, subd. 3, and the employee benefits portion of the external fixed costs payment rate determined pursuant to section 256R.25.”<sup>7</sup> The board fulfilled this obligation by consulting with DHS to create a fiscal analysis, which determined the estimated fiscal impact on the state share of Medicaid payment rates for nursing home facilities. An appropriation for this cost was included in the first special session law, Chapter 9, Article 12, Sec. 10, Forecasted Programs; medical assistance.<sup>8</sup> The initial set of minimum-wage standards have an implementation date of Jan. 1, 2026, or 30 days after federal approval, whichever is later, to allow time for seeking an appropriation and obtaining federal approval. To see this fiscal analysis, visit [dli.mn.gov/about-department/boards-and-councils/nhwsb-meeting-materials](https://dli.mn.gov/about-department/boards-and-councils/nhwsb-meeting-materials) and refer to the meeting materials for May 9 and April 29, 2024.

## Holiday pay, posting requirements and certifying worker organizations rules

A second set of rules addresses holiday pay standards, the board’s obligation to certify worker organizations to provide training to nursing home workers about the standards set by the board as well as other rights and

---

<sup>5</sup>“Based on this information, the board must seek to adopt minimum nursing home employment standards that meet or exceed existing industry conditions for a majority of nursing home workers in the relevant geographic area and nursing home occupation.” (See Minn. Stat. section 181.213, subd. 2(a).)

<sup>6</sup>Minn. Stat. section 181.213, subd. 2(c).

<sup>7</sup>Minn. Stat. section 181.213, subd. 2(c).

<sup>8</sup>[Chapter 9 – MN Laws](#).

protections mentioned in the NHWSB Act<sup>9</sup>, and the requirements for employers to provide notice to nursing home workers about their rights and obligations under the act.<sup>10</sup>

In an NHWSB survey of workers, paid holidays tied with health insurance as priorities for increasing the health and welfare of nursing home workers (38.6% workers named it as a priority) after a raise in pay (100%) and pensions or retirement plan (47.1%). The board responded to this by establishing holiday pay standards in Minnesota Rules 5200.2010, which sets a minimum-pay standard that nursing home workers are paid time-and-a-half their hourly wage if they work on the 11 state holidays observed in Minnesota, pursuant to Minn. Stat. section 645.44, subd. 5(a). Those days are:

- New Years Day, Jan. 1;
- Martin Luther King's Birthday, the third Monday in January;
- Washington's and Lincoln's Birthday, the third Monday in February;
- Memorial Day, the last Monday in May;
- Juneteenth, June 19;
- Independence Day, July 4;
- Labor Day, the first Monday in September;
- Indigenous Peoples Day, the second Monday in October;
- Veterans Day, Nov. 11;
- Thanksgiving Day, the fourth Thursday in November; and
- Christmas Day, Dec. 25.

If employers come to an agreement with a majority of affected workers, they can exchange up to four state holidays for other days the employees and employer prefer.<sup>11</sup>

The posting requirements in Minn. R. 5200.2020 fulfill the requirements in Minn. Stat. section 181.215 and ensure nursing home employers inform their workers about the rights and obligations under the act.

The certification of worker organization rules, at Minn. R. 5200.2030 through 5200.2050, will help the board fulfill its obligation to certify worker organizations to train workers about their rights under the NHWSB Act. The rules lay out a procedure to accept and process applications from worker organizations and a procedure to renew and revoke the certification as necessary. It also includes requirements for the board to maintain a public list of certified worker organizations.

The rules regarding holiday pay, the certification of worker organizations and requirements for posting went into effect Jan. 1, 2025.

---

<sup>9</sup>Minn. Stat. section 181.214, subd. 1.

<sup>10</sup>Minn. Stat. section 181.215, subd. 2.

<sup>11</sup>Minn. R. 5200.2010, subpart 2(B).



## Curriculum and certification

The NHWSB Act also requires the board to set curriculum requirements for the certified worker organizations to use when training workers.<sup>12</sup> In this process, the board conducted a hybrid hearing about the proposed curriculum Sept. 19, 2024.<sup>13</sup> Copies of the materials provided for this public hearing are available online at [dli.mn.gov/about-department/boards-and-councils/nhwsb-meeting-materials](https://dli.mn.gov/about-department/boards-and-councils/nhwsb-meeting-materials), under “Special meeting: Sept. 19.”

On Feb. 13, 2025, the board voted unanimously in support of the proposed “Certification of worker organizations and worker training guide.” This set of documents contains the guide for the board to use in evaluating applications for certifying worker organizations, information for nursing home employers about their obligations to ensure the training is provided and documented, and the application and instructions for worker organizations seeking board certification. The guide also contains the curriculum requirements the board requires training to satisfy and provides a sample presentation that meets those curriculum requirements.

During three board meetings in the spring and summer, the board discussed three applications for certification as certified worker organizations. All three organizations were certified July 10, 2025. One board member recused himself from discussion and abstained from voting on two of the organizations seeking certification because of his connection to them, but the votes were otherwise unanimous in favor of certification. Information about NHWSB certified worker organizations is available at [dli.mn.gov/business/employment-practices/nhwsb-certified-worker-organization-information](https://dli.mn.gov/business/employment-practices/nhwsb-certified-worker-organization-information).

To meet its statutory obligations, the board has scheduled its annual review of curriculum for early 2026. Additionally, it set the deadline for employers documenting with the board that their workers had received at least an hour of training by a certified worker organization (CWO) for Sept. 30, 2027. The board also directed the executive director to reach out to CWOs to find out if trainings have begun. The board would like to ensure that there is enough capacity of CWOs to train all workers.

## Waivers and variances

Under the NHWSB Act, the board is obligated to “adopt procedures for considering temporary variances and waivers of the established standards for individual nursing homes based on the board’s evaluation of the risk of closure or receivership under section 144A.15, due to compliance with all or part of an applicable standard.” (See Minn. Stat. section 181.213, subd. 4.) To meet this obligation, the board developed a waivers and variances procedure and application in anticipation of the first standards adopted by the rules becoming effective Jan. 1, 2025. Since the holiday pay, posting requirements and certifying worker organizations rules have gone into effect, one nursing facility has applied for a waiver from the holiday pay rules. The board considered this application and granted the waiver in July, exempting that facility from the holiday pay rules for the remaining holidays in 2025, a total of five holidays.

---

<sup>12</sup>Minn. Stat. section 181.214, subd. 2.

<sup>13</sup>Minn. Stat. section 181.214, subd. 2b.

## Review of standards

Following the implementation of rules, the NHWSB Act charges the board to review the adequacy of standards established by the board and adopt, amend or repeal rules to meet the charge of protecting the health and welfare of Minnesota’s nursing home workers.<sup>14</sup> While one set of rules has not yet become effective, and the second set of rules went into effect Jan. 1, 2025, the board has already begun its efforts to collect the data and feedback necessary to conduct its review of the adequacy of the standards.

The NHWSB Data Workgroup has been meeting regularly to discuss what data can be collected and how to analyze the data for the purposes of reviewing and evaluating the standards. In the initial market investigation, the board was able to use data collected by DHS as part of the Nursing Home Workforce Incentive Grant, which was a cornerstone in determining the average wages of nursing home workers in Minnesota. Unfortunately, this data was based upon a one-time grant program, so the data will not be updated, and its usefulness in reviewing the standards will be limited. To replace this source of data, the NHWSB Data Workgroup has been examining and evaluating other data sets that provide information about wages in the nursing home industry. The workgroup’s investigations remain ongoing as it works to identify useful sources of data.

Simultaneously, the board as a whole, and the NHWSB Public Hearing Workgroup in particular, have embarked on renewed public outreach efforts. In fall 2025, the board conducted five public forums throughout the state, with the express goal of collecting direct feedback from nursing home workers, nursing home employers and the public generally. The board has also engaged in direct and individual outreach to nursing home administrators, with the executive director of the board reaching out to each nursing home administrator serving a nursing home affected by the board standards individually, providing those administrators with an opportunity to present any questions or feedback they wish directly to the board staff.

## Workgroups

The board uses workgroups to focus on specific issues and statutory obligations. The workgroups that are currently active are: the Certification/Training Workgroup; the Data Workgroup; the Public Hearing Workgroup; the Waiver Review Workgroup; and the Waivers and Variances Workgroup. Each workgroup includes at least a commissioner or commissioner’s designee, a member from the employer representatives and a member from the worker representatives. The meetings have also included guests from employer and worker organizations and other state agencies. The NHWSB executive director and DLI staff members have supported each workgroup and meeting.

### Certification/Training Workgroup

In addition to setting standards for nursing home workers, the NHWSB Act requires the board to certify worker organizations to train nursing home workers about the standards and other rights and obligations under the act. After adopting initial rules governing the certification process in 2024, the Certification/Training Workgroup guided the board in finalizing an application for worker organizations to become certified and developed a guide

---

<sup>14</sup>Minn. Stat. section 181.213, subd. 3.

for the board, nursing home employers and worker organizations to be in compliance with the rules and statutes.

The application, guide and list of current certified worker organizations is available online at [dli.mn.gov/business/employment-practices/nhwsb-certified-worker-organization-information](https://dli.mn.gov/business/employment-practices/nhwsb-certified-worker-organization-information).

Agendas, minutes and information about meeting dates for the Certification/Training Workgroup are available online at [dli.mn.gov/about-department/boards-and-councils/nhwsb-certificationtraining-workgroup](https://dli.mn.gov/about-department/boards-and-councils/nhwsb-certificationtraining-workgroup).

## Data Workgroup

The NHWSB Act lays out several types of data that must be researched before setting minimum-wage standards, including wage rate and benefit data, collective bargaining agreements and local minimum standards. The Data Workgroup is investigating: which existing sources of data can provide additional insight into the employment conditions of nursing home workers; if the board should survey its own data; how best to analyze data the board collects; and how to track the impact the standards established by the board are having on the health and welfare of nursing home workers. Data work also includes researching the average hourly wage for a given occupation in a nursing home.

During the past year, the Data Workgroup has researched data sources that could help the board evaluate the effect of current standards on nursing home working conditions and guide the board in adopting, amending or repealing any standards to better protect the health and welfare of nursing home workers. The Data Workgroup has looked a number of different sources of data, including DHS cost report data, the MDH nursing home report card, information about nursing home closures, the Department of Employment and Economic Development's Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, as well as its Job Vacancy Survey, and Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Data Workgroup is finalizing a recommendation to the board for a consistent model of data monitoring.

This recommendation will build on the board's work in 2023 and 2024, which guided the initial minimum-wage standards and holiday pay standards investigation. In that period, the Data Workgroup used a tool developed by DHS based on data derived from the workforce incentive grant program that compiled actual per-hour wage data of nursing home workers who make less than \$30 an hour.<sup>15</sup> This tool was critical to the board's work to develop appropriate minimum-wage standards for nursing home workers because it illustrated whether a proposed standard would meet the statutory "majority benchmark," the statutory directive that "the board must seek to adopt minimum nursing home employment standards that meet or exceed existing industry conditions for a majority of nursing home workers in the relevant geographic area and nursing home occupation."<sup>16</sup>

Agendas, minutes and information about meetings of the Data Workgroup are available online at [dli.mn.gov/about-department/boards-and-councils/nhwsb-data-workgroup](https://dli.mn.gov/about-department/boards-and-councils/nhwsb-data-workgroup).

---

<sup>15</sup>"5b Analysis of Data for WFSB 20240130 11452" from the Feb. 8, 2024, board packet – [nhwsb\\_5b\\_analysis\\_of\\_data\\_020824.xlsx](https://live.com/nhwsb_5b_analysis_of_data_020824.xlsx) (live.com).

<sup>16</sup>Minn. Stat. section 181.213, subd. 2(a).

## Public Hearing Workgroup

The NHWSB Act requires the board to gather testimony from workers and employers<sup>17</sup>, as well as conduct a public hearing about the curriculum that will be used to train workers about the standards set by the board.<sup>18</sup> Because nursing home workers and employers are located throughout the state, the Public Hearing Workgroup engaged stakeholders using virtual and in-person forums, and in-person visits to nursing facilities.

The board scheduled five hearings in 2025 to solicit feedback about the implementation of holiday pay and anticipated implementation of the minimum-wage standards, as well as to hear from the public about working conditions that could help the board consider new standards. This feedback helps the board review current standards as directed by the NHWSB Act.

The Public Hearing Workgroup compiled lists of questions for the forums to help guide the discussion. It did not limit the conversation, but shared with employers, workers, organizations and the public the questions that were top of mind for the board members. Those questions were as follows.

### For providers

- How have the holiday pay rules affected staffing and the ability to hire?
- How have they affected your facility financially?
- How did the implementation for the holiday pay rules go for your facility?
- How are the coming minimum-wage rules affecting staffing and the ability to hire? What is their anticipated effect on your facility's finances?
- Do you feel prepared to implement these minimum wages?
- What else would improve the health and wellbeing of workers in your facility?
- What else would improve the health and wellbeing of workers in your facility?
- What data do you think would be helpful for the board to examine?
- Are your facilities planning to use the Minnesota Secure Choice Retirement Program (available at [securechoice.mn.gov](https://securechoice.mn.gov)) when it is implemented?

### For workers

- How have the holiday pay rules affected your satisfaction in the workplace?
- How have the holiday pay rules affected you financially?
- How have the holiday pay rules affected the functioning of the facility where you work?
- How do you anticipate the minimum-wage standards will affect your satisfaction in the workplace? Will they affect you financially? Will they affect the functioning of the facility where you work?
- What else would improve the health and wellbeing of workers in your facility?

A summary of the forums is provided in the Outreach section below.

More information about the Public Hearing Workgroup, including agendas, minutes and meeting dates, is available online at [dli.mn.gov/about-department/boards-and-councils/nhwsb-public-hearing-workgroup](https://dli.mn.gov/about-department/boards-and-councils/nhwsb-public-hearing-workgroup).

---

<sup>17</sup>Minn. Stat. section 181.213, subd. 2(b)(4).

<sup>18</sup>Minn. Stat. section 181.214, subd. 4.

## Waiver Review Workgroup

The Waiver Review Workgroup does an initial review and potential recommendation of applications for waivers and variances before they go to the board. The workgroup met twice in 2025 to discuss the one application that the board received for the holiday pay rules. Each meeting resulted in additional questions for the applicant and discussion points to bring to the board. The meetings helped inform the Waivers and Variances Workgroup about its next steps as the board reviewed the application process for the minimum-wage standards.

This workgroup has a standing meeting prior to the board meetings. If there are no applications received by 3 p.m. the Monday before the workgroup meeting, the review meeting is canceled. As of Nov. 30, 2025, no applications for waivers from the minimum-wage standards has been received.

Agendas, minutes and information about meetings for the Waiver Review Workgroup are available online at [dli.mn.gov/about-department/boards-and-councils/nhwsb-waiver-review-workgroup](https://dli.mn.gov/about-department/boards-and-councils/nhwsb-waiver-review-workgroup).

## Waivers and Variances Workgroup

To help the Board establish procedures for considering temporary waivers and variances from the standards, the Waivers and Variances Workgroup was established. The workgroup focuses on creating the mechanisms by which nursing homes can apply for a waiver or variance, and to assist the board in evaluating applications for a waiver or variance.

The first waiver application for holiday pay was made available Dec. 11, 2024. Applications can be submitted on a rolling basis and two special deadlines were made available for nursing homes to receive an answer about their waiver application before Jan. 1, 2025, when the holiday pay standards went into effect.

A revised waiver application was launched Oct. 17, 2025. This included the ability to ask for a waiver or variance from the minimum-wage standards, as well as holiday pay. The revisions also reflected the significant discussion among the Waivers and Variances Workgroup and the board about the many factors that could lead to closure or receivership.

Agendas, minutes and information about meeting dates for the Waivers and Variances Workgroup are available online at [dli.mn.gov/about-department/boards-and-councils/nhwsb-waivers-and-variances-workgroup](https://dli.mn.gov/about-department/boards-and-councils/nhwsb-waivers-and-variances-workgroup).

## Outreach

As the implementation of the minimum-wage standards approaches, the board determined additional outreach to nursing home employers and workers would be productive. The board planned five public forums to hear from nursing home workers, employers, organizations and the public generally. Additionally, the board supported the executive director calling the nursing home administrators to offer information and gather feedback.

### Public forums

The Board conducted five public forums in October and November 2025. The forums were all from 5 to 7 p.m. and legislators who represent the area were invited. Attendees included nursing home administrators, current

and former nursing home workers, employer organizations, worker organizations, legislators and members of the public. Below is a summary of the forums.

On Oct. 28, the board had its first forum of the year at the Detroit Lakes Library in Detroit Lakes, Minnesota. In total, 10 people attended. Employers shared their dedication to paying their workers more, but also expressed dismay at the cap on the nursing home rates and uncertainty as they waited to hear about the rate add-on that would help pay the cost upfront of implementing the minimum-wage standards. They also noted the complexity and importance of providing care in rural communities and concerns about the wage compression the minimum wages put on their budgets. The worker who attended cited the heavy workloads and inability to provide appropriate care without appropriate staffing.

On Oct. 30, members of the board and its staff went to the Windom Community Center in Windom, Minnesota, for the board's second forum, with 16 people in attendance. Similar frustrations were expressed by employers about the cap on rates and concerns about wage compression, which one facility cited as costing \$271,000. The importance of nursing homes as a place for elders and as a community employer in rural Minnesota was also noted. One employer cited concerns about certified worker organizations, which the board will follow up on. One worker expressed positive anticipation of higher wages and a desire to come together with workers and employers to put residents first.

On Nov. 6, at the forum at the Albert Lea Firehouse Training room in Albert Lea, Minnesota, members of the board heard from some of the 20 attendees. Besides some concerns about rates and wage compression that have already been stated, employers brought questions about why the minimum wages are statewide, what data is available about super rural facilities and what the measures of success are. One unique issue that was brought up was a facility that employs people through a STEP program that will have to cut their hours so as not to go over the limit for wages for receiving Supplemental Security Income benefits. One member of the public brought up how much the number of beds has decreased in their community and how many are opting for other types of facilities, such as assisted living facilities.

On Nov. 18, at the forum at the Great River Public Library, Bremer Room, in St. Cloud, Minnesota, members of the board heard from some of the 22 attendees. The members of the public expressed concern about reimbursement rates and wage compression. One common theme at the St. Cloud hearing from both employers and workers was retention. It was stressed that retention and low turnover is paramount to compassionate care for nursing home residents. A unique point raised at the St. Cloud forum was higher pay for registered nurses (RNs) in nursing homes, because they typically make less than hospital-placed RNs. The high cost of health insurance was raised by multiple speakers and highlighted as an item for the board to investigate.

On Nov. 20, the board had a forum at the Department of Labor and Industry in St. Paul, Minnesota. This was a hybrid meeting, offered both in person and online. Nine members of the public attended in person, while approximately 60 members of the public attended online. Nine people attended the forum online from individual devices, while approximately 50 people joined from one location and took turns speaking. The board heard feedback about: people working double shifts or more than one job to provide for their families; a higher minimum wage; pensions with provider contributions; understaffed facilities; gratitude for holiday pay wages; fears of facilities closing if they cannot afford to pay the new minimum-wage requirements; and a possible decrease in access in rural Minnesota if closures occur.

In conclusion, the board conducted five public forums where the public provided feedback to the Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board. These forums were in Albert Lea, Detroit Lakes, St. Cloud, St. Paul and Windom, Minnesota. The board received 111 registration requests, with 138 people attending. At the forums, 58 people spoke, with 33 representing workers, 18 representing employers and seven representing other interests, such as advocates or public officials.

## **Calls to nursing homes**

With an updated waiver and variance process and application, public forums happening and the implementation of the minimum-wage standards on the horizon, the NHWSB executive director set out to call the nursing home administrators to offer assistance and information. As of Nov. 5, 2025, the executive director had attempted to contact 295 nursing homes that appear to meet the definition of nursing home under the NHWSB Act and follow up with email messages and further conversations, as requested.

The calls resulted in 46 conversations and an additional 24 messages acknowledged, and six meetings scheduled or in the process of being scheduled. One hundred sixty-nine administrators received a voicemail message and an email message from the executive director; an additional 50 received an email message only, due to incorrect contact information or other technical difficulties.

The conversations ranged from simple acknowledgements that facilities were working to implement the standards to expressing concerns about how they would pay for the standards and concerns about the caps on rate increases. Many expressed enthusiasms for paying workers more, but also cited concern about the wage compression and budgeting in uncertain times. Some questions were raised about wanting a training wage for those under 22 years old or a rural minimum wage, lower than an urban minimum wage.

Administrators expressed passion for training programs, employee retention and a desire to hire enough people to adequately staff if workers are available. Some had not heard about the waiver and variance application, which was often part of the conversation and highlighted in the follow up email message. Many were glad to hear about that option, but also concerned that in a competitive market, the waiver might not give the employer much relief. One nursing homeowner asked that the Legislature allocate more money for nursing home care.

Many administrators were thankful for the outreach and additional information and contact but also were quite busy. One administrator was answering the phones because their usual receptionist was out sick. This highlighted how hard people work in nursing homes.

## **Materials**

In anticipation of standards being in effect, both in 2024 and now in 2025, the board has made many materials available to guide workers and employers.

Information, including a narrated presentation about the holiday pay standards, a list of minimum-wage standards and a draft of the posting requirements is available online at [dli.mn.gov/about-department/boards-and-councils/nhwsb-minimum-wage-holiday-pay-rules](https://dli.mn.gov/about-department/boards-and-councils/nhwsb-minimum-wage-holiday-pay-rules).

The application and instructions for a waiver or variance are online at [dli.mn.gov/about-department/boards-and-councils/nhwsb-waiver-variance-resources](https://dli.mn.gov/about-department/boards-and-councils/nhwsb-waiver-variance-resources).

The *Guide for certified worker organizations and training requirements*, along with the list of current certified worker organizations, is available online at [dli.mn.gov/business/employment-practices/nhwsb-certified-worker-organization-information](https://dli.mn.gov/business/employment-practices/nhwsb-certified-worker-organization-information).

## Conclusion

The Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board implemented a set of rules regarding holiday pay, worker organization certification and posting of notice of rights that became effective Jan. 1, 2025. Statewide minimum-wage standards have been promulgated and are now awaiting federal approval; the minimum-wage standards could go into effect as early as Jan. 1, 2026. With the implementation and anticipated implementation of the standards, the board worked to ensure nursing home workers, administrators and the general public are aware of the standards that are in effect and will soon come into effect, and the process by which nursing home facilities can seek a waiver or variance from the standards if compliance with those standards would place an undue risk of closure or state receivership upon the facility. Additionally, the board is collecting data as directed by the NHWSB Act. The testimony gathered by the board in 2025 included concerns about staffing and worker retention, the cost of health insurance, wage compression, funding gaps and access to nursing facilities in rural communities. The testimony also included appreciation for increased wages and a call for employees and employers to work together to prioritize the needs of nursing home residents.

The board's continued collection of data and testimony, along with the accumulated knowledge of implementing rules, will be used to conduct investigations into the conditions of employment in the nursing home industry as part of the board's obligation to conduct a full review of the adequacy of the standards every two years.