

Senate Business, Labor, & Technology

05/01/2025 Upon Adjournment

HB25-1328 Implement Recs Direct Care Worker Stabilization Bd

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Sophie Mariam For CFI	<p>Chair and members of the Committee,</p> <p>I am here to testify in support of HB 25-1328. Colorado’s direct care workforce—primarily women, immigrants, and people of color—is the backbone of our long-term care system. Yet, these essential workers are leaving the field in droves due to persistently low wages, unsafe working conditions, and widespread wage theft.</p> <p>Care work is in crisis. Demand is rising fast—expected to grow by 27% over the next decade—but poor job quality is driving workers out. Turnover is rampant: 1 in 6 direct care workers in Colorado leaves their job every quarter. Families are increasingly left to fill the care gap themselves, sacrificing jobs and income—especially women.</p> <p>Low wages are at the heart of the problem. Care workers are seeing stagnant wages amid rising costs, as research suggests public funding is falling behind demand and wages lag behind the real, rising costs of care. Workers funded through Medicaid may be at a competitive disadvantage: state-funded workers earn less than private-sector caregivers.</p> <p>The median wage for home care workers in Colorado is just \$17.37—well below what’s needed for self-sufficiency anywhere in the state. Many direct care workers rely on public assistance just to survive. CFI’s analysis reveals that in 2023, over 30% of home care workers were on Medicaid—even though their work is funded through Medicaid.</p> <p>Wage theft makes a bad situation worse. Nationally, up to 1 in 5 private household workers—many of whom are home care workers—have experienced minimum wage violations. CFI estimates that wage</p>

	<p>theft costs the state more than \$45 million in forgone tax revenue each year, and the cycle of wage theft will continue without passing policies like this bill- we need training for workers to stand up for fair wages.</p> <p>HB25-1328 takes overdue steps to address this. It ensures clear communication of worker rights and protections, and establishes a minimum wage floor of \$17 per hour and a path toward \$25 by 2028—offering a roadmap to fairer compensation for our essential workers.</p> <p>This bill isn't just about care workers—it's about the sustainability of Colorado's entire care system. Supporting these recommendations will strengthen the workforce, reduce turnover, and improve outcomes for people who depend on care every day.</p> <p>I urge you to vote yes on HB25-1328. Thank you.</p>
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MEMO

TO: Senate Business, Labor, & Technology Committee
FROM: The Arc of Colorado | Meredith Henry, Senior Policy Associate
RE: **HB25-1328 Implement Recommendations Direct Care Worker Stabilization Board**
DATE: Thursday, May 1, 2025

Thank you to the Chair and Members of the Committee for the opportunity to submit written testimony. My name is Meredith Henry, and I serve as the Senior Policy and Advocacy Associate at The Arc of Colorado. Our organization is dedicated to advocating for Coloradans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and promoting their full inclusion and participation in the community.

The Arc of Colorado strongly supports HB25-1328 and are grateful for the efforts of the bill's sponsors, Senators Danielson and Bridges, and their commitment to addressing the needs of Colorado's most vulnerable populations.

Due to factors that include, but are not limited to, an aging population, low wages/benefits, lack of stable funding, Colorado is facing a critical shortage of direct care workers, creating significant barriers to accessing consistent, high-quality care...not everyone has the care they need *and* according to a 2022 Bell Policy Center study, 41% - yes, nearly half – of Colorado's direct care workers who provide those services also rely on public assistance, including cash and food assistance to help make ends meet. A well-supported direct care workforce is essential for individuals with IDD to receive home- and community-based services that allow them to live independently and with dignity. This bill recognizes direct care work as a vital profession and takes important steps to strengthen and expand this workforce.

Quality of life and the effectiveness of home- and community-based services for people with IDD is directly tied to the quality and training of the direct care workforce. Inadequate compensation and insufficient funding for livable wages, as well as for training and support for both direct care workers and their supervisors, undermine the quality of care available to people with IDD. This not only impacts the quality of life for individuals with IDD but also limits their ability to live the lives they choose within their communities.

If we – *all* of us – are truly committed to a Colorado for *all*, we must do the work and make the investment that ensures *all* Coloradans, including our family members, friends, and neighbors with IDD have the right to live full, meaningful lives in communities of their choosing. To realize this, they must have access to comprehensive, person-centered care that is high-quality and community-based. We commend this bill's efforts to strengthen and grow the direct care workforce in Colorado and strongly encourage its passage.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Meredith Henry



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