

Thank you Mr. Chair and members of the committee for accepting my written statement of support for SB23-261. My name is Maggie Gómez and I am the Colorado State Director with SIX Action.

Home care workers, nannies and house cleaners have historically been excluded from basic labor protections and any real opportunities to improve their working conditions. Workers in these sectors are predominately women, women of color, and immigrants, and due to the legally allowed exclusions dating back to the New Deal era, these direct care givers are poorly paid, lack benefits and economic security, and are susceptible to discrimination and abuse. These workers face issues of poverty, lack of health insurance coverage, and have been working tirelessly for their clients, as well as for better benefits and quality of life for themselves and their families. Care workers deserve the power to come together to discuss issues and have a say in solutions to ensure accessible quality care for all Coloradans and quality jobs for those who provide it.

Workforce stabilization boards like the one proposed in SB 261 are governmental bodies that bring together workers, employers, and government leaders to investigate pressing issues and to set or recommend minimum standards for jobs in particular occupations and sectors. These boards have a directive to thoroughly investigate challenges facing workers and make recommendations regarding minimum wage rates, benefits, and workplace standards. Standardizing pay encourages a more compressed wage distribution, which helps equalize pay for women and limit racial discrimination for women of color, who are overrepresented in this sector. Another part of their operations, these boards conduct hearings and outreach activities, as well as issue reports on their findings. Regularly including the public is great for transparency and engagement with the direct care community and other stakeholders. Stabilizing the direct care workforce with a meaningful way to involve direct care givers, care consumers, employers and government leaders is the way forward to reach important milestones necessary to ensuring this workforce finds ways to be sustainable as the need for direct care givers grow.

The state has an important role in recognizing that this industry cannot stabilize quick enough to meet to growing needs for direct care consumer and their care givers by hoping that employers will raise the floor one their own, one by one, making industry wide changes. The workforce stabilization board process incentivizes companies to compete based on greater productivity rather than lower pay. In doing so, it prevents low-road companies—those that do not offer good wages and benefits—from undermining high-road companies that do right by their workers. Simply put, when direct care workers have a seat at the decision-making table alongside employers, care consumers, and government leaders Colorado can build a roadmap for raising the floor across the entire industry. With public engagement and transparency, we can strive for the best standards for the people caring for our loved ones, and for all those who play a part in making this workforce the best it can be.

SB 261 will give direct care workers a meaningful seat at the decision-making table to make recommendations on what it will take for Colorado to be a national leader in stabilizing the home care workforce to ensure our communities can continue to access quality care, and I respectfully ask for your support. Thank you.