



**Testimony in Support of SB 440**

Monday, February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Senate Committee on Rural Communities and Economic Development

Jennifer Barr, RN

Chair Monnes Anderson and members of the committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 440.

My name is Jen Barr. I am a Registered Nurse at a large Portland area hospital and enrolled in the University of Portland's Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program. I also serve as a member of ONA's Cabinet of Health Policy.

Oregon Nurse Practitioners have earned a broad scope of practice. They practice independently without supervision of a physician. Oregon NPs diagnose and treat illness, prescribe and dispense medication and manage the health care needs of their patients. I made the decision to pursue my DNP because I enjoyed practicing nursing, but I was looking for more autonomy in my practice.

The nursing care model places an important emphasis on primary and preventative care. The University of Portland's DNP program focuses specifically on caring for underserved populations and developing leadership skills to help NPs reduce health disparities within underserved populations.

As a nurse I believe that focusing on primary and preventative care is vital. Not only can it help reduce the cost of health care for everyone, but quality primary care can help ensure acute and chronic care is not needed later down the road, significantly improving the long-term quality of life for our patients.

I'm eager to graduate from UP's program and put the skills I have learned to good use in our community. However I worry, with over \$100,000 of student loan debt by the time I graduate, I won't be able to work with underserved populations directly out of school. The patients in rural and underserved areas tend to be uninsured, underinsured, or Medicaid and Medicare patients. This means the reimbursements are much lower than those from private insurance. Therefore providers working with underserved and rural populations make significantly less than provider working in more affluent communities.

For the most part, my classmates and I have all taken on a significant amount of student loan debt in order to pursue advanced nursing degrees and become primary care practitioners. Funding a primary care provider student loan repayment program would help ensure that those of us who need assistance repaying loans can still go to work caring for underserved populations, ultimately helping to achieve a health care system that provides quality and affordable care for all Oregonians, regardless of ability to pay, and makes our state a healthier and more prosperous one.

Please support passage of Senate Bill 440.

Thank you.

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