



SB 457 with the Scholarship Amendments

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Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health and Human Services
Kindra Scanlon, RN

Co-Chairs Bates and Nathanson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association and Nurse Practitioners of Oregon in support of the proposed scholarship amendments to SB 457.

My name is Kindra Scanlon and I am an RN, soon to be MN, future FNP and a member of NPO and ONA. ONA represents more than 13,000 Oregon nurses, advanced practice nurses and nursing students. Oregon nurses make up the largest segment of Oregon's health care work force, and work in nearly every health care setting, from large hospitals to small local clinics, from corrections to school based health centers, and community-based public health.

The scholarship program created through the amendments proposed to SB 457 would cover the cost of education for students who are studying to become registered nurse or nurse practitioner students, among other providers, who agree to practice in a rural or medically underserved area of Oregon upon completion of their education. This program helps accomplish two important goals: it attracts providers to underserved areas and provides financial assistance to students who would otherwise be taking on student loan debt. It also requires that at least 25 percent of the scholarship money goes to students pursuing careers in primary care.

Many of Oregon's rural and medically underserved areas struggle to attract the providers they need to care for the population. As a result, patients have a difficult time accessing care when they need it, and in some cases patients may forgo necessary care altogether. As Oregon continues to implement the Affordable Care Act and move the focus of health care delivery to primary and preventive care, we need to develop a plan for ensuring we have an adequate workforce throughout the state. For this reason, ONA has supported a number of different programs that aim to attract and or retain providers to rural and underserved communities.

Student loan debt is often an obstacle for providers who would like to work in underserved settings. The scholarship program created by the proposed amendment to SB 457 can help offset the financial burden of foregone wages for providers and their families who often sacrifice other benefits to live and work in a medically underserved community. The program would also increase access to advanced education for students who want to be care providers but do not have the means to fund their education.

As a scholarship recipient myself, I know how important programs like this can be for students who wish to pursue a nursing career, but face financial barriers. I couldn't have completed my schooling without the financial assistance I received to continue my career. I faced a number of unanticipated barriers including family members battling cancer during my time as a student. To say I am thankful for the vital support I received is an understatement. I plan to always give back to nursing, to volunteer in underserved communities, and encourage others to pursue a career in nursing. I am eternally grateful for the support I received. I strongly believe more opportunities like the ones I received should be available for other students who work hard and have a desire to serve Oregon.

Please support the proposed scholarship amendments to SB 457.