

Testimony for House Committee on Business and Labor

Regarding HB 2684
Jana R. Bitton, MPA
Executive Director, Oregon Center for Nursing
503-342-4047, bitton@up.edu
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Good afternoon, Chair Holvey, Vice-Chairs Barton and Kennemer, and members of the Committee. My name is Jana Bitton, and I am the Executive Director of the Oregon Center for Nursing. I am here to provide testimony on behalf of House Bill 2684, a bill that would allow retiring nurse educators to continue working without losing benefits from the Public Employees Retirement System.

The Oregon Center for Nursing is a nonprofit organization with a mission to ensure a superior, well-prepared and diverse nursing workforce to meet the health and wellness needs of our communities. Our work centers on identifying issues critical to the nursing workforce, and then bringing together industry, education and nursing organizations to provide solutions. Our work is proactive, and allows leaders to make course corrections as needed to ensure Oregonians have the best possible nursing workforce.

OCN has been studying the nurse faculty workforce for quite some time. In 2009, OCN released *Oregon's Nurse Faculty Workforce*, which examined the demographics of nurse faculty, including career satisfaction and retirement plans. OCN repeated the survey in 2011 and 2014 to give us three points of data. The new nurse faculty workforce report will be released this spring, and today I can present some preliminary findings.

Nurse faculty in Oregon are aging and reaching retirement age. From our preliminary results of the 2014 nurse faculty survey, 54 percent of current nurse faculty are over the age of 55. Twelve percent are over the age of 65.

Many nurse faculty intend to retire or already have retired. Thirty-one percent of nurse faculty with a Master's degree and 28 percent of nurses with a Doctorate plan to retire in the next five years. This means, Oregon will need 117 new nurse faculty in the next 10 years.

However, many other nurses are choosing to delay their retirement past traditional retirement age. This is true nationwide as well as in Oregon. According to a study published in *Health Affairs*¹, nurses in general are extending their careers by 2.5 years after the age of fifty, and this trend pre-dates the

¹ Auerbach, David I., Buerhaus, Peter I., and Staiger, Douglas O. Registered Nurses are Delaying Retirement, A Shift that has Contributed to Recent Growth in the Nurse Workforce. *Health Affairs* August 2014, Vol. 33 No. 8, Pg. 1474-1480.

recession. In Oregon, 57 percent of nurses said they anticipated retiring after age 65 in 2008. By 2014, that number increased to 80 percent.

The delay in retirements will give Oregon the time to prepare future nurse educators. It takes time to educate nurses to the Master's and Doctorate levels, which they will need to become educators. Nursing education in Oregon is better if we can keep experienced nurse faculty in the workforce to teach the new generation of nurse educators.

Oregon would benefit from a delay in retirement, and HB 2684 would provide nurses an incentive to stay in the workforce and keep up with their plans.

Thank you for this opportunity. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.