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Pediatric and Congenital Cardiac Surgery
Support HB 2541A
May 5, 2015

Senator Monnes Anderson and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jennifer Barr and I am writing to you in support for HB 2541A. From 2009-2014 I worked as a registered nurse, first at the Portland VA Medical Center and most recently at Providence St. Vincent Medical Center. In 2014, I graduated from the University of Portland with my Doctorate in Nursing Practice. I currently practice as a family nurse practitioner (FNP) at Oregon Health and Science University. I am also a member of the Oregon Nurse's Association Cabinet on Health Policy, elected to serve by my peers. Of the many roles the cabinet address, one of our most important services is to set the Oregon Nurse's Association legislative agenda. We carefully consider health policy matters that impact nursing practice, patient safety, public health, and social justice. Prior to the start of this legislative session, my colleagues and I decided to prioritize HB 2541 to help ensure Oregon has a licensed health care provider present on every blood drive operated in Oregon. We believe this is an important standard that should not be compromised in order to save blood collection companies money.

In my current position at OHSU, I work with the Pediatric and Congenital Cardiac Surgery team. We serve both pediatric and adult patients with congenital heart disease. We operate approximately 4 days a week, and over 85% of those cases are done using a heart-lung machine, or cardiopulmonary bypass machine. Part of my role is making sure we have enough donated units of blood to keep our patient's safe during their surgery. Without those donated units, many of our patients would have an extremely difficult surgical and recovery process; some might even die. It is extremely important that our state has an adequate and safe blood supply. We rely on our community to donate, mainly through blood drives conducted by the Red Cross. As a health care provider, however, I am extremely concerned to see blood collection organizations work to eliminate the role of registered nurses on blood drives. I appreciate the refined skills of fellow RNs to triage patients, provide education to donors, and screen for any concerns. I also recognize the importance of having a registered nurse present in case of an emergency. As safe as blood drives can be, there is always the risk of an adverse event, and as we all know, response time and rapid intervention is key in a full recovery from any type of adverse event. Furthermore, it is public perception that there is a registered nurse at every blood drive; it would be extremely unfortunate if the number of donors and units collected decreases if the public learns this is not the case.

I implore you to support HB 2541 A, and ensure that we have a safe environment for wonderful Oregonians to donate such valuable, life saving blood, and to provide continued protection for that donated blood to safely arrive to patients, in particular, the ones I serve almost daily in the operating room.