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Oregon Nurses Association
Support SB 698 A
June 9, 2015

Co-Chairs Bates and Nathanson:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 698 A. The Oregon Nurses Association is proud to represent over 12,000 nurses throughout the state, practicing in nearly every health care setting, including schools and school based health centers.

In 2009, the Oregon State Legislature recommended the state establish a ratio of one school nurse for every 750 students by 2020. Currently, Oregon has only one school nurse for every 4,054 students, with no viable plan to meet the Legislature's goal. SB 698 A will provide Oregon with the tools necessary to determine how we can meet this goal by 2020.

Without school nurses, students must rely on school staff to meet complex health care needs. This causes serious safety and health problems for students and their families and places school staff in an uncomfortable position. Students without access to school nurses miss out on valuable wellness and disease prevention education, early intervention services, and an important gateway to necessary medical services in and outside of school.

School nurses are currently funded through the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and forced to compete with other important ODE priorities. SB 698 A creates a task force to explore possible remedies for this problem and to make recommendations regarding alternative funding sources for school nursing services. SB 698 A also creates a full time School Nurse Consultant within the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to coordinate with ODE.

SB 698 A is an investment that will help determine how to best establish a coordinated effort to meet the state's school nurse-to-student ratio goal and spread the use of best practices to improve students' health and academic outcomes. ONA urges your support.