



Testimony in Support of SB 253

Chris Hewitt

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Chair Roblan and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association, representing over 14,000 registered nurses throughout the state, I urge you to support Senate Bill 253. ONA members have all completed extensive higher education in order to obtain licensure in Oregon, with many relying on available financial assistance programs to afford the costs associated with a nursing degree.

SB 253 is an important step toward ensuring greater financial aid transparency and accountability from our state's array of higher education institutions, including for schools that offer nursing programs. With the demand for active registered nurses in Oregon projected to increase by an estimated 1.9% annually over the next decade¹, now is an important moment to take proactive steps that help improve access to higher education and eliminate barriers hindering students from pursuing career paths vital to the public good.

By requiring higher education institutions to disclose information to financial aid recipients specifying amount of education loans received as well as the approximate remaining loan amount owed upon graduation, SB 253 will help to empower students to make more informed decisions about where to seek their aid and also promote greater accountability in lending practices.

As our current workforce continues to transition and the health care needs of our population increase, Oregon's higher education system should remain as transparent and accessible as possible to ensure that we are producing the next generation of qualified professionals to meet our state's demand. ONA has long supported a range of key proposals over the years seeking to address affordability and financial integrity in higher education and SB 253 is no different.

Increasing institutional accountability and ensuring access to critical information on individual educational finances is an important measure that will help better to support both aspiring nurses and other students in career programs crucial to our state. ONA urges your support for SB 253.

¹ Oregon Center for Nursing. (2016). The Demand for Nursing Professionals in Oregon. Available at: <http://oregoncenterfornursing.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2016-OCN-TheDemandforNursingProfessionals-Web-NEW.pdf>