



A V A M E R E

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February 26, 2017

Members of the Oregon Legislature:

I would like to offer my support for House Bill 2540. The bill, if passed as written, would give community college boards the ability to request state approval from the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to award Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degrees under certain conditions. This would allow nurses with an associate's degree in Nursing another opportunity to gain their BSN.

The Institute of Medicine's report on the future of nursing recommended that 80 percent of nurses obtain their BSN by 2020. For many students, an associate degree is their access into the nursing profession. Approximately 50 percent of entry into practice nurses start with an associate degree. Workforce and community colleges are encouraging these nurses to continue on to get their BSN. It seems a benefit for students to be able to obtain their RN-BSN in their local community, and potentially at the community college where they began.

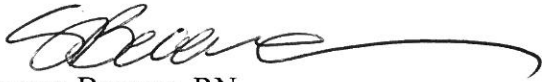
The ability for community colleges to award the RN-BSN degree may assist our communities and Oregon in addressing the shortage of bachelor's prepared nurses. We need to be ready to serve the aging population as our current workforce prepares for retirement.

Patients within Long Term Care facilities have become increasingly acute. RN-BSN staff providing direct patient care use their education and critical thinking skills to make urgent decisions when a provider is not available. As a Charge Nurse, they oversee quality care of 30 patients or more during their shift, including care provided by certified nurse's aides. RN-BSN programs prepare students to not only think as a nurse, but also as a manager who will effectively lead the team they oversee.

For Avamere Court at Keizer, allowing the community college to offer this program would be beneficial because it would increase the number of RN-BSN available in the work force. As it stands, the Long Term Care industry struggles to compete with other healthcare providers for these valuable employees. Just recently, we received final notice from two of our RN-BSN employees. Although they were happy in their current positions, each had job offers with higher wages at local hospitals. The loss of these employees will have a negative impact within our facility. Despite our active RN recruiting in the community for many months now, we have received almost no applicants. If our local community college were to offer an RN-BSN program, students with financial, geographical or scheduling barriers will find it easier to reach their goals and become available within the work force.

I hope you will support House Bill 2540.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shannon", with a long, sweeping horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Shannon Becerra, RN  
Director of Nursing  
Avamere Court at Keizer