



Lake County Board of Commissioners

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Dan Shoun, Chair
Bradley J. Winters, Vice-Chair
Ken Kestner, Commissioner

February 14, 2017

Oregon Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Members of the Oregon Legislature:

We are writing today to urge you to join us in supporting House Bill 2540, which permits Oregon community colleges to offer applied baccalaureate degrees in nursing to individuals with specified qualifications. The bill is sponsored by Rep. Jodi Hack, District 19.

Nursing comprises the largest segment of the healthcare workforce in Oregon, and our state is on the brink of a crisis. Oregon's growing population and increasing aging population means that more nursing healthcare workers will be needed than ever before. A report recently released by the Oregon Center for Nursing forecasts the need for registered nurses with baccalaureate degrees to increase or stay the same statewide through 2025 in hospitals, home health, public health and the long-term sectors. The report says the need for registered nurses with associate degrees is expected to decrease.

In Klamath and Lake counties, we face our own unique geographic and economic challenges. Recruiting qualified healthcare professionals to rural Oregon is difficult, at best. The most logical solution for our communities is to "grow our own" talent through our local college, Klamath Community College, and encourage professionals to remain in the region after graduation.

The ability to provide a baccalaureate degree in nursing from Klamath Community College will make education more affordable for our rural residents. College costs can be prohibitive for residents living in economically depressed rural areas, and providing a baccalaureate-level degree locally opens more accessible avenues for our residents' education options. Studying locally also decreases financial barriers created by attending an expensive four-year university and higher living costs associated with the areas those colleges are located in.

The passage of H.B. 2540 is imperative to our economy and the strength of our state's healthcare facilities. We urge you to endorse H.B. 2540 to support our state's healthcare industry and rural Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Dan Shoun
Chair

Bradley J. Winters
Vice-Chair

Ken Kestner
Commissioner