



we are *family*

February 21, 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.

For Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinics, dba Lancaster Family Health Center in Salem and Salud Medical Center in Woodburn, allowing the community college to offer an RN-BSN program would be beneficial because it would increase the numbers of BSN nurses in our more rural clinics. It would allow easier access to a BSN degree for our Latino nurses who are often the first family member to graduate from high school, let alone college. Having these nurses obtain a higher degree and remain in their community gives us more culturally competent nurses. These nurses will have the opportunity to grow in their careers while helping and caring for people of their culture. As Patient Centered Medical Homes become more prevalent in healthcare, having bachelor's prepared nurses is crucial to meet the required standards.

I hope you will support House Bill 2540.

Sincerely,

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