

Legacy Silverton Medical Center

2/21/17

Chair Reardon and members of the Committee:

For the record my name is Karen Brady and I am the Vice President, Chief Nursing Officer at Legacy Silverton Medical Center. I am writing to testify to my support of 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 the nursing practice starts 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 Legacy Silverton Medical Center allowing the community college to offer an RN-BSN program would be beneficial because we do not have a BSN program locally to fill our need for bachelor prepared nurses. There is a growing body of evidence that shows that BSN graduates bring unique skills to their work as nursing clinicians and play an important role in the delivery of safe patient care. I believe that a BSN education better prepares our nurse graduates to meet the demands required in today's healthcare settings. BSN nurses are recognized for their ability to practice across a wide variety of inpatient and outpatient settings and demonstrate strong skills in critical thinking, leadership, and health promotion. Many employers, including Legacy now only hire new graduate RN's with a BSN. They will not consider ADN RN's for any new graduate programs and have limited opportunities for these RN's for open positions at both the bedside and leadership level.

A RN-BSN program in this area would offer the local nurse graduates a more in-depth education that would enhance the student's professional development and a better understanding of the economic,



social and political issues that affect our patients and influence the delivery of health care in our community.

Our associate degree nurses do not have a local option for continuing their education, leading them to seek their BSN degree from schools outside our area. We often have a hard time recruiting BSN prepared nurses because of the distances they must travel in order to work here. We have found in the past several years, as we have continued to try and recruit BSN prepared nurses that if we are able to hire a BSN RN because we offer training in speciality areas to new graduates, we have a hard time retaining these nurses.

The financial cost of losing a single nurse has been calculated to equal about twice the nurse's annual salary . This averages to an estimated \$200,000 per year for each nurse that leaves. Losing these critical employees negatively impacts the bottom line of our organization in a variety of ways including:

- Decreased quality of patient care
- Increased contingent staff costs
- Increased nurse turnover
- Increased turnover of medical support staff
- Increased staffing costs
- Increased accident and absenteeism rates

If Chemeketa offered a RN-BSN program we would have a better chance of recruiting locally prepared BSN graduates and retaining them.

I hope you will support House Bill 2540.

Sincerely,

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