



Experience. AT YOUR SIDE.

HB 2540 Testimony to the House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce

Chair Reardon and members of the Committee, for the record my name is Pam Matthews and I am the Executive Director for Willamette Valley Hospice here in Salem.

Our organization provides hospice care; home palliative care and other end of life services to patients living in Marion, Polk, Yamhill, Linn, Benton and parts of Clackamas Counties. A key member of our hospice team is the Registered Nurse. The RN is the Case Manager for our patients and families. The role of Case Manager is to coordinate the care provided by the hospice interdisciplinary team which includes the Medical Social Worker; the Spiritual Counselor; the Hospice MD; the patient's Attending MD; the Pharmacist as the core team in addition to other team members who may include Music Therapy; Massage Therapy; Physical; the Hospice Aide; and volunteers. In addition, the Case Manager is the point person with the patient; family and other caregivers in facilities or the hospital to assure that needs are met.

We are not able to provide care without nurses. We are once again experiencing a nurse shortage in recruiting for open positions. It is a challenge to find nurses to fill our open positions and to find the *right* nurses with the skills to do the job. Not only do we need more nurses, we need nurses who have the advanced degree of a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN). BSN nurses have the additional education to understand systems of care; regulatory and payer issues; relationship building with referral sources and shared responsibilities with other community providers; as well as more in depth work in developing critical thinking skills from both a clinical and systems perspective.

BSN prepared nurses have in depth training in evidenced based practice to be excellent clinicians as well as leadership skills necessary to coordinate care with a diverse group of other healthcare disciplines who are members of the care team both internally and in the community.

The hospice nurse is part of an interdisciplinary care team and at the same time is independent and autonomous in nursing practice. The orientation for the BSN prepared nurse is generally more efficient and less costly in time required than time with the nurse who does not come with the additional training. Those nurses

who have come to hospice with their Associate Degree and go on to get their BSN after practicing in hospice have told me the greater understanding and comfort level they discover in their practice once they experience the additional education, particularly in the area of understanding the value of evidence based nursing practice. For our nurses this work is pain and symptom management for our dying patients as well as family systems and grief work with families and caregivers.

I have talked with several of our nurses who are currently pursuing their BSNs. Those who are doing so now are utilizing distance learning and needing to travel for face to face classes. They have told me they would have preferred to do this work locally and be able to have the classes in Salem. One told me she would have pursued her BSN earlier in her career had the program been available in Salem.

The ability for community colleges to award the RN-BSN degree is very likely to assist our communities and Oregon in addressing the shortage of bachelor's prepared nurses. Many of our hospice nurses are preparing for retirement - turnover is going up due to this life transition. In addition younger nurses have many options and are often seeking a variety of nursing experiences which adds to turnover after a few years in the intensity of hospice practice.

Willamette Valley Hospice supports allowing the community college to offer an RN-BSN program. I hope you will support House Bill 2540.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

References:

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) wants to increase the number of BSN nurses from 50% to 80% by 2020.

- American Association of Colleges of Nursing fact sheet about IOM report with the benefits and need for more BS degree nurses: <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/media-relations/fact-sheets/nursing-workforce>
- IOM Report: The future of nursing: Leading change, advancing health. This is the part of the report that talks specifically about nursing education: <http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Reports/2010/The-Future-of-Nursing-Leading-Change-Advancing-Health.aspx>