



Testimony in Support of House Bill 2862

March 28, 2017

House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development

Joanne Noone, PhD, RN

Chair Reardon and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of House Bill 2862- Nurse Faculty Loan Repayment. I have been a nurse educator for 30 years and have been a director of a nursing program for the last 7. Within my own community in Southern Oregon, I am continually approached by different health care sectors expressing the rapidly increasing need for registered nurses to enter the local workforce. Today, there remain numerous unfilled nursing positions at our local hospitals and clinics. Simply put, Oregon needs more qualified educators in order to prepare a sufficient amount of nurses and better meet the demands for care in our state.

By state law, nursing education must adhere to a clinical ratio of eight students to every nursing faculty in order to maintain patient safety during clinical instruction. Nurse educators, by state and national accreditation standards, should have a minimum of a master's degree and often are forced to accumulate significant loan debt in order to attain this degree. Unfortunately, there are notable income disparities for nurse educators as compared with nurses working in clinical practice.

Recently, one of my excellent nurse educators, who has incurred significant school loan debt, informed me that he needed to leave his teaching position to return to clinical practice. HB 2862 would help serve as an excellent support for nurse educators such as my colleague to be retained and remain in their imperative faculty positions. If this loan repayment program were to be reinvested in and made available to qualified applicants, it would stand as a significant incentive for nurse educators to stay in their roles. Additionally, this program would also be an important recruitment tool for nurses to consider entering the field of education to help train and develop the next generation of nurses that will be so vital to Oregon's health care system.

I urge your support for HB 2862.