



Testimony in Support of House Bill 2862

March 28, 2017

House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development

Sheryl Caddy, RN, JD, MSN, CNE

Chair Reardon and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today in support of House Bill 2862. I am Sheryl Caddy, Nurse Administrator/Faculty at Linn-Benton Community College in Albany. I am also a member of Oregon Nurses Association and the Oregon State Bar.

You will hear, or have now heard, the results from the fabulous and informative work that the Oregon Center for Nursing has done as it relates to our Nursing Faculty Workforce issues. I can only echo this information and speak to you from my own experience here today.

Nurses contemplating entering the field of nursing education must grapple with a significant wage disparity. When considering the opportunities available to nurses with advanced degrees, the cost of obtaining the advanced degree and the return on the investment, nursing education is quite frankly, a losing proposition and a significant barrier to entering a satisfying and much-needed career path.

Compensation disparity in light of the required educational needs associated with becoming a nurse educator makes recruitment difficult at best. Nurses interested in advanced degrees can pursue a more lucrative career as a nurse practitioner or remain within a health care system and receive promotion with higher pay or wage differentials for advanced education. Many health care systems offer tuition reimbursement for their employees on top of professional development funds for nurses to participate in professional development to maintain competence and expand their skill set.

Nurse educators are highly sought after today. At Linn-Benton Community College, we have an increasingly difficult time recruiting and retaining nurse faculty. The lack of faculty is a significant barrier to the ability to expand - and sometimes maintain - the numbers of students we have. The need for nurses in Oregon is growing; not only for staff nurse positions but also to fill the pipeline for nurse practitioners. We are seeing a significant rise in the numbers of employers coming to our campus to recruit our students. The need for nurses is very real. To get them, we need to be able to educate them. To do that, we need nursing faculty to enter and remain in the field.

HB 2862 will help alleviate one tremendous barrier to nurses becoming nurse educators - the cost of that education - the need to receive a monetary return on their educational dollar and help offset accompanying costs. Nursing education is an extremely satisfying career that can positively impact the practice of nursing for generations but the cost is high, the workload is high and compensation is low relative to other clinical settings. This bill will assist in making this career choice a more viable option for many nurses.

In my college setting, we do not offer wage differential for advanced education or receive tuition reimbursement; it is an expectation of our employment. While we do receive professional development funds, just as staff nurses do, these funds are used to maintain and expand our skill set in both nursing and in education, so we may be effective in both areas.

In the next few years, as the need for nurses as primary care providers increases and the number of nurse educators decrease through retirement or leaving education for other opportunities, our state needs to find ways to increase recruitment and retention in the nurse educator workforce in order to maintain the pipeline of new nurses to better meet the demand for care. Reinvesting in the Nurse Faculty Loan Repayment program is a vital tool that will serve to address this rising challenge.

I urge your support for HB 2862.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sheryl Oakes Caddy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

RN JD MSN CNE