

March 24, 2017

Testimony in Favor of House Bill 2862

Chair Reardon, and distinguished members of the Committee:

My name is Jana Bitton and I am the Executive Director of the Oregon Center for Nursing, a non-profit organization which provides independent research on Oregon nursing workforce, and facilitates collaboration on nursing workforce issues. It is an honor today to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2862, allocating \$350,000 to Nursing Faculty Loan Repayment Program.

The Nurse Faculty Loan Repayment Program was created in 2009 to help recruit and retain educators in Oregon's nursing programs. The Oregon Center for Nursing, and our partners on the Oregon Team, a group of stakeholders representing education, philanthropy, government and employers, were strong supporters of this legislation. When the legislation passed, Oregon Center for Nursing assisted in distributing information about the loan repayment program and was part of the committee who decided which applicants received funding. The initial program funding of \$200,000 was used to help seven nurse educators repay faculty loans and allowed them to remain educators in Oregon.

Nursing education is at a critical juncture in Oregon. Recent research conducted by the Oregon Center for Nursing illuminates many of the difficult issues facing programs directors currently.

- **There is incredible turnover in the field of nursing education.** A review of nursing licenses showed that more than half of nursing educators in 2012 had left teaching by 2014.
- A study of Oregon nurse faculty in 2014 showed **more than 2/3 of educators had considered leaving nursing education in the past year.**
- In 2014, the median age of an Oregon nurse educator was 56. **As many as one-half of Oregon's educators planned to retire by 2025.**

Nursing programs confront many issues in the struggle to recruit and retain faculty, but one of the biggest issues is the salary disparity between educators and other nurses, and the need to obtain graduate education to teach nursing.

- **A master's or doctorate degree in nursing** and two to three years of clinical practice **are required to work as nurse faculty.** Obtaining these degrees takes both time and money. A master's degree in nursing may cost up to \$60,000. A typical doctoral program takes five full-time years to complete, costing up to \$113,000.
- **Nurse faculty make, on average, \$10,500 - \$38,000 LESS than registered nurses working in care settings.**

Programs like the Nurse Faculty Loan Repayment Program help nurse educators offset the cost of education and compensate for the lower salaries former clinicians encounter when becoming educators.

These are the ongoing issues facing Oregon's nursing programs. We have already begun to hear that programs across the state are lowering student enrollment because they don't have the faculty necessary to support students. Additionally, Oregon continues to face a potential nursing shortage in the next decade. Recent calculations from our organization, supported by additional research from the Health Resources and Services Administration, predict that **Oregon will have a deficit of 6,000 registered nurses by 2025**. Oregon's nursing programs need to be expanding, not decreasing, enrollment if we are going to be able to provide care for our citizens in the next decade. The Nurse Faculty Loan Repayment is an additional tool that our schools can use to help recruit and retain faculty in their programs.

We recognize the Nurse Faculty Loan Repayment Program cannot solve all the issues effecting the nursing faculty shortage. However, the loan repayment program is a significant recruitment and retention tool which will assist Oregon's nursing programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.

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