



Testimony on LC 62

June 22, 2020

Joint Interim Committee on The First Special Session of 2020

Deborah Riddick, JD RN

Good afternoon CO-Chair Courtney, Co-Chair Kotek, and members of the committee. My name is Deborah Riddick. I am the Director of Government Relations for the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). We represent 15,000 registered nurses throughout the state the Nurse Practitioners of Oregon. ONA and NPO support the many of the provisions outlined in LC 62 as necessary improvements to stabilize local economies and put the region on the path growth.

Our ONA is diverse and we are privileged to care for communities all across the state. So, it is important to us that our nurses, and the communities they serve, have the best opportunity for positive health and well-being. It has been established that adequate resources, social, economic, infrastructural, are key. Many of these communities faced growing inequities going into the pandemic which have accelerated under the necessary restrictions related to our current pandemic. This has been an oversight years in the making and we must demonstrate our commitment to creating better equity as we move forward.

We support the Eastern Oregon Border Economic Development Board in establishing programs to enhance and expand workforce development and economic development in Eastern Oregon Border Economic Development Region. Providing the necessary grant funding will reduce barriers to associated with market entry or modernization. Retooling these communities and strengthening educational programs will enable them to begin their transformation. We also are committed to ensuring that the workforce has protections that protect their physical and economic well-being, as the human capitol driving the economic growth in Eastern Oregon. Alignment with and support of this vital workforce must be a primary consideration for sustainability.

We strongly support this effort and believe that our current health care workforce to meet the needs of this community is a vital piece of the puzzle. Workforce development thrives in communities that have the infrastructural supports to maintain an expected quality of life. The health care infrastructure is key. What we know about our nursing workforce is that we have enough licensed nurses with the state, however there is a geographic and specialty misalignment. Simply put, our nurses are clustered in a way that creates a maldistribution. They remain on the frontlines and, despite these challenges, continue to provide consistently, high-quality care. We support reinvisioning health care within the region that includes incentives, telemedicine and telenursing, and innovative ways to provide the essential services that every Oregon community deserves. Incentives and collaboratives must be considered to attract providers into these high-need, under-resourced areas.

We understand this challenge and are unequivocally committed to safe nursing practice and to upholding our state's high nursing standards. And our members must receive commitments that the infrastructure they help to strengthen institutes workplace protections. We would love to partner with the Board and legislature to help provide solutions that increase nursing practice in this area of the state.