

To whom it may concern:

I am writing this letter in support of SB 754, offering a tax credit to nurse educators of rural colleges. Please allow me to share a little about my background.

My name is Jessica Humphreys and I am a 31-year-old full-time faculty of Blue Mountain Community College in Pendleton, Oregon. I earned my Bachelors of Science in Nursing from University of Portland and worked for Legacy Mount Hood Medical Center in the Intensive Care Unit for five years following my graduation. During those formative years, I learned to work as a team and care for complex patients and families during their most vulnerable states. It was an incredibly rewarding role, but I learned to also love orienting new graduate nurses and taking nursing students under my wing. I was inspired by a mentor to enroll in an MSN program, with intentions of one day pursuing a career in nursing education.

While I was earning competitive wages as an ICU nurse in Portland, I was very excited to see a full-time faculty position be available in my home town, Pendleton. Although questioning whether I was really ready to teach this early in my nursing career, the hiring committee at Blue Mountain Community College was eager to hire me. I was surprised to hear of the starting salary wage, at \$62,000, which was a significant cut from what I was making currently in the ICU. However, as a young and single individual, my expenses were limited to my student loans and living expenses and my excitement for utilizing my brand new MSN: Nursing education degree prevailed.

While I've loved my position here at BMCC, my financial situation has changed in a very common way, I've married and had two children. In rural environments, a number of laborers are farmers and ranchers and as you likely know, it can be challenging to raise a family on a farmer/rancher income. This is especially true of young farmers, who are trying to start their own businesses (the challenges there are another conversation entirely). This describes our family and many others. I am a full-time mother who provides the primary income, and the only insurance, for our family. While living costs continue to rise in the setting of limited funding allocation for community college, the pay inequity for the long term becomes a concern. I don't see those variables changing anytime soon, which makes me often question, "Can I afford to stay in Nursing Education". This question makes me sad, because I truly believe I'm serving more patients in our community by shaping the future nurses that care for our community and scale of that footprint is pretty amazing. By now you've heard the statistics of retiring nurse educators, but I hope you were listening to the percentage of new nurse faculty who leave education within the first five years. I've watched two out of our five new/young nurse faculty leave BMCC to go back to bedside nursing just in my five-year tenure. While I'm still very passionate about nursing education, its challenging to be making ends meet while I watch my new nurse graduates be hired with a wage 20% higher than what I'm making, before I pin them during graduation.

My concerns for nursing education do not rest with the lack of compensation, but with the viability of our program and other rural programs around the state. While everyone is quick to reference "the nursing shortage", what they fail to realize is that the root of the problem is further upstream. The shortage is of nursing faculty, and with the safety limits of 1:8 faculty-to-student clinical ratio, this severely limits the number of nursing students we can admit and graduate every year. Add increased faculty turn over and a decrease in program quality, and NCLEX pass rates will fall, resulting in even fewer employable RNs. We all know the negative outcomes with regards to patient safety with short staffing. **The solution is finding a way to RECRUIT and RETAIN more nurse educators.**

Please consider this testimony in support of SB 754,

Thank you,

Jessica Humphreys