

Testimony for Public Hearing
Senate Committee on Health Care
February 25, 2019
Emily Middleton, BSN, RN, CPN, SANE-OR

SB 754: Relating to a tax credit for rural nurse faculty members; prescribing an effective date.

Greetings Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care. My name is Emily Middleton and I am a Registered Nurse (RN), Certified Pediatric Nurse (CPN), Certified Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE-OR), and most recently, Clinical Faculty for the Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU) School of Nursing located on the Monmouth Campus hosted by Western Oregon University. As you may be aware, OHSU facilitates several rural campuses in the State of Oregon, which allows students located all over the state to have access to an internationally-renowned nursing education that will prepare them to address pressing health needs of Oregonians.

I am writing to you in support of SB 754: Relating to a tax credit for rural nurse faculty members; prescribing an effective date. This bill proposes a tax credit for rural nurse faculty members and I believe that implementing this credit will be a positive factor in addressing current shortages of registered nurses and nursing faculty across the state. Several reports have identified upcoming critical shortages of registered nurses due to the aging of the population and the aging and anticipated retirement of a bulk of experienced nurses. While schools of nursing across Oregon continue to provide excellent education and graduate hundreds of new nurses each year, it is not enough to meet the demand. However, a shortage of available nurse faculty to fill existing positions (much less open new positions) makes it difficult to increase the numbers of nursing students admitted to programs.

I would like to share my personal experience with you, in order to emphasize the difficulty in recruiting and retaining expert nurses in faculty positions. As a bedside nurse working part time in a community hospital, I enjoyed working with nursing students who came through our unit. Teaching clinical skills and concepts was a highlight of the work that I did in the hospital. I also recognized the great need for nurses to join the educational force and was passionate about advancing the field of nursing. Because of this, I decided to pursue a Master's Degree in Nursing Education so that I could work toward a teaching position. During that time, several positions opened up in the Nursing Program that I matriculated from, and needed to be urgently filled in order to meet the needs of upcoming students. I applied with the understanding that I would continue working toward my degree at the same time. This created a financial dilemma for my family. In order to accept a faculty position, I gave up my scheduled position working as a bedside nurse at the hospital. At my current level of experience, full time pay for bedside nursing in the hospital (without consideration for overtime hours and continuing education hours) is \$30,000 more than the salary I receive in my faculty position. Over the years, there is an exponential increase in the gap between potential earnings ability as a bedside nurse versus nursing faculty. In addition to the significant reduction in compensation, I also am working through the Master's Degree program, which is an educational requirement

of the position. This requires not only extra time, but additional financial burden to cover the cost of tuition and other educational expenses. Many nursing faculty, myself included, are also expected to advance their degrees to doctoral levels during their careers, often at their own expense.

To put this in perspective, many newly graduated nurses will earn more in their first year of nursing than their faculty will earn after ten or more years of experience with advanced degrees.

I am honored to work in a career that is fulfilling and challenging, contributing to the better health of Oregonians. I view this as a service to my community and my profession. I hope you will consider the importance of approving this tax credit as a means of supporting nursing faculty throughout our state in the work that they do.

Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,

Emily Middleton, BSN, RN, CPN, SANE-OR