



Testimony to the Joint Task Force for Hospital Discharge Challenges

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Honorable Members of the Joint Task Force,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I wish to respectfully clarify some points regarding the presentation on Oregon's nursing workforce provided by the Oregon Longitudinal Data Collaborative (OLDC) , a program of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission.

Growth of Oregon's Nursing Workforce

Over the past eight years (2014-2022), Oregon has seen a 54.2 percent increase in the number of Registered Nurses who are licensed to practice in Oregon. During this same period, Oregon's population grew by 8.1 percent. In fact, Oregon's population is currently growing at 0.35 percent (year over year), while its registered nursing workforce is growing at 11.2 percent (year over year). Despite this growth, the perception of a shortage of nurses persists, especially for those working in long-term care and other community based settings, or those working in rural parts of the state.

State Investment in Nursing Education

Although data from the OLDC indicates that Oregon ranks last in public funding for nursing education, it's important to contextualize this. Oregon's primary publicly funded Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program is offered through Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU), which operates campuses in Portland, Eastern Oregon University, Western Oregon University, Southern Oregon University, and Oregon Institute of Technology in Klamath Falls. With OHSU students and the 17 community colleges nursing program students, graduates from publicly funded programs make up 57 percent of graduates from all Oregon nursing programs. Students enrolled in publicly funded programs account for 43 percent of enrolled nursing students across the state.

Nurse Faculty Salary Challenges

The challenge of competitive salary for nurse faculty is not unique to Oregon; it is a nationwide issue. In Oregon, while nurse faculty earnings (average wage of \$51.68 per hour) are comparable to those of nurses in non-hospital settings (average wage of \$52.15 per hour), their annual income is less due to the 9-month academic schedule. This disparity needs continuous attention to ensure we attract and retain top-tier faculty for nursing education.

Workforce Strategies for Addressing Hospital Discharge Delays

To effectively address the persistent delays in hospital discharges, a broader approach may be warranted. Recent data suggests significant vacancies not only in RN positions but more so in roles such as Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs), Medical Technicians (Med Techs), and Caregivers. A focus on bolstering education and support for these roles may alleviate some of the staffing pressures in long-term care and community-based settings, improving our capacity for timely patient discharges.

Conclusion

The Oregon Center for Nursing is committed to our mission of informing policy and creating workforce solutions through robust data analysis and collaboration with key stakeholders. Since our inception in 2002, we have dedicated ourselves to making Oregon an exemplary state for nursing practice, and currently partner with stakeholders across Oregon including the Oregon State Board of Nursing, the Oregon Nurses Association, the Hospital Association of Oregon, the Oregon Health Authority, Oregon's nursing education programs, and employers of nurses in all settings where nurses practice.

Your continued support and attention to these issues are crucial as we strive to enhance healthcare across all communities in Oregon.