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February 7, 2023

David A. Cauble
President & CEO

Representative E. Werner Reschke
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE, H-383
Salem, Oregon 97301
Email: Rep.EWernerReschke@oregonlegislature.gov

Dear Rep. Reschke:

On behalf of Sky Lakes Medical Center and the citizens we serve in this region I want to thank you for your leadership and hard work in promoting and sponsoring HB 2602.

Recruitment and retention of healthcare providers, particularly nursing staff, to rural regions has become increasingly difficult. The challenges hospitals face recruiting and retaining nursing staff is well documented both here in Oregon and across the country. Currently Sky Lakes Medical Center has a nurse vacancy rate of 32.4% and to meet the needs of our community we are currently contracted with more than 74 temporary nurse travelers at significant cost to our health system.

We face many challenges recruiting and retaining qualified nursing staff - e.g., lack of amenities, limited retail options, high rates of poverty and unemployment, etc. Your efforts to achieve eligibility for nursing staff tax credits will create an additional benefit to make practicing in a rural community a more attractive alternative. Many of our nurses are from the Klamath Basin and have found a path out of poverty and toward financial independence through a career in nursing. Beyond the immediate financial benefit to our staff, the tax credits will also serve to aid many within our system achieve further career advancement by providing additional financial resources to pursue higher levels of education perhaps moving from a nursing assistant role to that of a registered nurse.

Nursing eligibility for this tax credit is a creative solution that will undoubtedly assist in our efforts to build and retain our nursing staff. Our ability to share this with existing nursing staff and present this to new candidates will both increase the pool of interested applicants and help retain our current outstanding team of nurses. In short, it gives us "one more arrow in our quiver" to help promote our region, and I am confident it will ultimately help improve the health and well-being of the people living in the Klamath Basin.

Again, thank you for leading the charge on this important topic. We are grateful for your efforts on our behalf.

Sincerely,

David A. Cauble
President and CEO

cc: John Bell, Chairman of the Board