



Support for SB 414

February 21, 2023

To: Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Weber, Members of the Senate Committee On Education

From: Russell Lum, Political Organizer, Oregon Nurses Association

Re: Support for Senate Bill 414

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Weber, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for Senate Bill 414 on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). ONA is a nurses union and professional association representing over 15,000 health care workers and providers, including registered nurses, advanced practice nurses, and allied health workers. Our members work in urban and rural hospitals, clinics, school-based health centers, home health care, and county health departments across Oregon.

ONA has been advocating for high-road public health regulations such as clean air standards for decades. Population health, the utilization of the health care system, and quality of life for our communities — all these hang in the balance in a policy space like indoor air quality. ONA works toward having fewer people with disease or severity of disease, such as asthma. We work toward having safe working environments for workers and safe, conducive learning environments for students. We further work to see that state, federal, and local investments in infrastructure make for a healthier future.

Thus Senate Bill 414 is an alignment of multiple priorities and stands out as needed legislation, even in a pre-pandemic analysis. When COVID-19 and the infectious diseases of the future are factored in, the gains that stand to be made by the bill are overwhelming. COVID has strained the health care system and put system capacity, public health measures, and the role of nurses at the forefront for three grueling years. We need to continue to take steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 because of its ongoing presence in the community, continued contributions to mortality and disability, and overfilling of hospital room, especially when layered with respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), influenza, and spillover effects from delayed care.

Three air changes per hour, a ventilation standard to which this bill is linked, is a minimum requirement for COVID safety; though a minimum, this standard significantly removes illness-



causing contaminants from the air.¹ We look forward to the bill making clean air a reality, in this and other ways, where so many work and study.

The bill does the following:

- Requires an assessment school districts must conduct on their air quality, every five years
- Directs the school district to undertake corrective repairs or upgrades, if any are needed to meet the mechanical specialty code
- Utilizes existing code, not write new or higher-threshold codes
- Applies labor standards to the ensuing work, including providing prevailing wage and providing work to apprentices
- Leverages federal funds so school districts are not asked to shoulder the cost

SB 414 is bold, sensible, cross-cutting policy that supports education, living-wage jobs, health, and the environment. Please join Oregon nurses and many other advocates with your support of this bill.

Sincerely,

Russell Lum

¹ https://chippewa.com/pandemic-lessons-answers-to-covid-19-questions/collection_6256ec29-7bba-5bda-a2b3-cc66d3c642f2.html#1