



March 2, 2023

To: Chair Michael Dembrow, Vice-Chair Suzanne Weber, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education  
Oregon State Senate  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR, 97301

RE: Concerns with SB 523

Dear Senators of the State Committee on Education:

As the founding nursing dean at minority- and Hispanic-serving Warner Pacific University, which is a member institution of the Oregon Alliance of Independent Colleges and Universities (OAICU), I participate in new pathways for nursing students to earn higher education degrees in Oregon. On 11/15/2018, our BSN Degree Program received initial approval from the Oregon State Board of Nursing (OSBN). On 09/16/2021, we received “final approval,” with a scheduled review to occur in 06/2023. We are meeting all standards for continued approval.

Since inception, our overarching goals were to increase diversity in the nursing workforce and to address the national nursing shortage with BSN-prepared graduates, who fulfill expectations for the healing trinity of caring, safety, and leadership. Beginning spring semester 2019, we have enrolled 250 BSN students in nine cohorts and graduated 105 students representing desired categories of race, ethnicity, age, first-generation college students, and socioeconomic status. We have 124 BSN students continuing in Cohorts 6-9; 31 of them will graduate in May.

Brent Wilder of OAICU and fellow nursing deans have raised concerns about Senate Bill 523, which proposes to permit Oregon’s Community Colleges to offer an applied BSN degree. I attest to these ongoing concerns as they relate to our program and add my opposition to SB 523:

- **Clinical space and finding qualified faculty are the main obstacles** in community colleges conferring BSN degrees, not program capacity or geography (most BSN completion programs are available online). At WPU, we have not been able to fill one of our faculty positions since inception nor do we have sufficient numbers of clinical instructors for secured clinical placements each semester, forcing our full-time faculty to carry significant overloads each semester. Competition from community college programs would increase our difficulties through their same need for master’s prepared faculty and curriculum-related clinical rotations.
- **The wage gap and nursing faculty retention.** According to the [Oregon Longitudinal Data Collaborative’s \(OLDC\) “Addressing the Nursing Shortage in Oregon” draft report](#), when examining the faculty/retention issue, the wage gap between nursing faculty and a nurse practitioner, both of whom require a graduate degree, results in faculty earning \$49,000 less per year. Even more concerning, faculty earn approximately \$10,000 less per year than registered nurses in practice with an associate or baccalaureate degree. Further, US states with a higher nursing faculty-salary gap graduate fewer students per capita. These issues interfere with keeping our BSN Degree Program affordable and available to historically underserved students.
- The level of accreditation a community college would need to attain to confer a BSN is a significant additional cost to programs that are not already accredited. As a BSN Degree Program at a four-year institution, we received new applicant status from the national gold standard, the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), on 02/24/2021, giving our program an accreditation term of 5 years. CCNE assesses fees for new applicants, evaluators’ site visits, and annual dues.



- **The inability to accept more students in current programs is attributed to a lack of nursing faculty and clinical placements, not to the ability for ADN students to attain a BSN.** The OSBN has capped our program at 32 students each fall and spring semester cohort because of these attributions. There are many existing programs, ours included, worth building upon that would do more to address the lack of qualified nurses than allowing community colleges to confer BSN degrees.
- **The Oregon Consortium of Nursing Education (OCNE) is a long-standing statewide partnership of Oregon nursing programs** involving 11 community colleges, OHSU's 5 regional campuses, and OHSU's RN-BS online completion program. [OHSU received a \\$45 million investment from the legislature in 2022 to fund its 30-30-30 plan](#) to help address the state's urgent healthcare workforce needs, allowing OHSU to expand class sizes and to graduate additional and more diverse health care professionals, such as nurses through OCNE.
- The Schools of Nursing at several OAICU member institutions **maintain articulation agreements** with various community college programs and provide an affordable pathway to earning a BSN degree. These collaborative programs have room to accept more students. WPU has transfer guides for all area community colleges, and our nursing program maintains working relationships with community college counselors.
- Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) graduates have a plethora of **flexible and affordable options for RN-BSN** programs, not only in Oregon but also through accredited online programs across the country. Oregon does not need more RN-BSN programs. This only potentiates the faculty shortage issue for prelicensure needs.

WPU stands with OAICU in opposition to SB 523. In 2022, the legislature passed House Bill 4003, directing the Oregon Health Authority to create the [Nursing Workforce Study](#). This study, funded by the legislature, provides an extensive, data-driven analysis of the nursing workforce issues we currently face, as well as excellent conclusions.

The culminating recommendations of that study provide a clear strategy for addressing the issues, and **none of those recommendations includes community colleges conferring a BSN degree.** If we are going to address our nursing workforce challenges strategically, we need to follow the recommendations of the report the legislature has already commissioned. Putting limited resources toward initiatives that are not deemed to solve the problem is not a prudent use of public funds.

OAICU's goal of increasing students graduating with a BSN degree aligns with the state. I too see nursing as an area where transfer pathways and continued partnerships between community colleges and four-year universities are successfully working throughout the state. As a member institution, WPU looks forward to continuing work with stakeholders to address the barriers needed to close the gap in nursing workforce demand.

I trust this testimony gives you relevant insight into opposition to SB 523. Please let me know if you need additional information. You may reach me by cell phone at 720-371-8445 or by e-mail at [lscampbell@warnerpacific.edu](mailto:lscampbell@warnerpacific.edu).

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Campbell".

Linda Campbell, PhD, RN, CNS, CNE  
Dean and Professor, Department of Nursing



The baccalaureate degree program in nursing at Warner Pacific University is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (<http://www.ccneaccreditation.org>).