



TO: Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and Members of the Committee

FROM: Dr. Linda Veltri, Dean of Nursing, Bushnell University

DATE: March 2, 2023

RE: Concerns with SB 523

Thank you, Senator Dembrow, for the opportunity to provide input regarding Senate Bill 523, which proposes to permit Oregon's Community Colleges to offer a Bachelor's of Science in Nursing (BSN). As the Dean of Nursing at Bushnell University, I do not believe Senate Bill 523 will adequately address the nursing or nursing faculty shortage in Oregon for the following reasons:

- It could exacerbate the existing nursing faculty shortage by requiring community colleges to have more graduate-prepared faculty when teaching beyond an associate degree *and* a Nurse Administrator possessing an earned doctorate degree per Oregon State Board of Nursing OAR Chapter 21 (Rules) 851-021-0045 Standards for Approval: Nursing Faculty.
- Clinical space and finding qualified faculty are the main obstacles in community colleges conferring BSN degrees, not program capacity or geography. This is because most BSN completion programs, such as the one offered at Bushnell University, are available online.
- 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, nursing faculty earn approximately \$10,000 less per year than registered nurses in practice with an associates or baccalaureate degree. Just recently, Bushnell had a qualified master's prepare registered nurse decline a position as a full-time nursing faculty due to this wage gap.
- 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. Additionally, the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), which is an accreditor of undergraduate baccalaureate programs, requires nursing faculty to possess a graduate degree including those who teach clinical.

Further, 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 registered nurses with an Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) to attain a BSN. There are many existing programs, including Bushnell's CCNE accredited RN to BSN program worth building upon that would do more to

address the lack of qualified nurses than allowing community colleges to confer BSN degrees. For example:

- The Oregon Consortium of Nursing Education (OCNE) is a statewide partnership of Oregon nursing programs involving eleven community colleges, OHSU's five regional campuses, and OHSU's RNBS 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, graduate additional and more diverse health care professionals, such as nurses through OCNE.
- Like other Schools of Nursing, Bushnell maintains several articulation agreements with various community college programs and provides an affordable pathway to earning a BSN. We are well poised to accept many more ADN prepared students in our RN to BSN program, which can be completed in as little as 12 months.
- ADN graduates have a plethora of flexible and affordable options for RN to BSN programs, not only in Oregon, but through accredited online programs across the country. Oregon does not need more RN to BSN programs. This only potentiates the faculty shortage issue for prelicensure needs.

Additionally, in 2022, the legislature passed House Bill 4003, directing the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) 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. The culminating evidence-based 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 strategically address our nursing workforce challenges, 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 are simply not a prudent use of public funds.

Finally, our goal of increasing students graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing aligns with the state. We see nursing as an area where transfer pathways and continued partnering between community colleges and four-year universities is successfully working throughout the state and look forward to continued work with stakeholders to address the barriers needed to close the gap in Oregon's nursing workforce demand.