



**NEHALEM BAY**  
**HEALTH CENTER & PHARMACY**  
**COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITY CARE**

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February 28, 2023

Senate Higher Education Committee  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Dembrow and Members of the Senate Higher Education Committee:

On behalf of Nehalem Bay Health Center & Pharmacy (formerly known as Rinehart Clinic) in Wheeler, Oregon, I am writing to express support of Senate Bill 523, which will allow Community Colleges in Oregon to offer an applied baccalaureate degree in nursing as Bachelor of Science: Nursing degree.

Community Health Centers across Oregon have been hit hard with staffing shortages and are challenged to find qualified medical professionals in rural areas. Nehalem Bay Health Center is no exception. Our hope is that having an RN-to-BSN program at our nearby community colleges, including Tillamook Bay Community College, could increase access to four-year nursing degrees and help solve our collective ongoing staffing crises.

Having a viable, affordable, *local* option for nursing students to pursue their education and obtain their credentials could be advantageous not only to rural healthcare agencies, but also to potential members of the healthcare workforce.

We look to you to represent and support the communities we all serve, on the North Oregon Coast and elsewhere across in rural Oregon. Please allow Oregon's Community Colleges to offer the educational opportunities necessary for residents who want to pursue a career in nursing so that these trained professionals can, in turn, help address the workforce needs in rural healthcare agencies across Oregon. Please support Senate Bill 523.

Respectfully,

Gail Nelson, MHA, FACHE  
Nehalem Bay Health Center CEO