



# LINCOLN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Superintendent

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Senate Higher Education Committee  
Oregon State Capitol  
To Chair Dembrow and Members of the Senate Higher Education Committee:

2/28/2023

I am writing in full support of SB523 concerning the Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

In 2019, SB3 gave community colleges the ability to offer applied baccalaureate (BAS) degrees if authorized by the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC). However, if colleges are to offer a bachelor-level component in nursing, further legislation is needed in order to call the nursing degree a BSN, which is the industry and regulator-recognized title, rather than a BAS-N, which is not recognized by employers and nursing boards.

- A community college option for earning a BSN degree would increase access to four-year nursing degrees across Oregon and particularly in rural areas such as Lincoln County. In rural areas, where there are well-documented so-called "health care deserts," having a viable local and affordable option for nursing students to obtain credentials and educationally advance is critical to meeting health care needs
- A student with a BSN has more opportunities for promotion and higher pay.
- Many community college RN graduates are paying more expensive out-of-state, online providers to attain a BSN. Local community college alternatives would provide a lower-cost option.
- If community colleges were able to offer the BSN, it would provide a valuable local option to RN graduates who are not pursuing the BSN to continue their education with familiar faculty, learning environments, student supports and - critically - a more affordable career pathway than currently exists.
- An RN-to-BSN program from a community college will provide the opportunity for more equitable outcomes for underserved, often marginalized populations, as education from community colleges is a more accessible, affordable option.
- Sixteen\* out of 17 Oregon Community colleges currently offer 2-year Associate Degrees in Nursing (ADN) with a very successful track record for students. Successful completion of the Registered Nurse (RN) certification exam in 2021 is 85.8% for ADN programs statewide compared to 86.4% for BSN programs. (Talk about that student passage rate at your college)
- While it is true that clinical space is limited for nursing education programs, most of the bedside training in a hospital or other setting takes place in the first two years for the RN degree. In fact, an RN to BSN program does not require clinical training.
- All nursing programs that result in RN licensure require master's prepared nurse educators, which means that community college nursing faculty already have the credentials necessary to teach to the BSN.

I am in full support of SB523 and feel that it is extremely beneficial for students, workforce needs, and our community. I urge you to sign on to SB523 and support higher level skills in a critical field.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully, *Karen F. Gray*