



Senator Michael Dembrow, Chair  
Senate Committee on Education  
900 Court St NE, S-407  
Salem, OR 97301

**RE: Support SB 523**

***Chair Dembrow and members of the Senate Committee on Education,***

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill 523. As a health care provider currently seeking to onboard more than 300 nurses in Lane County Oregon, the technical fix contained in SB 523 allowing the Higher Ed Coordinating Committee to approve BSN programs at community colleges is crucial. Given what we know about current workforce shortages, increasing opportunities to obtain a Bachelor's of Science in Nursing (BSN) is vital for the future sustainability of Oregon's nurse workforce.

I want to recall the efforts of former Senator Mark Hass who championed the Oregon community college system during his time serving in the legislature. He fought to develop a community college system in Oregon that was geographically diverse and accessible by all. Hass also fought for a system that meets the needs of Oregon's economy. There was a time STEM was a focus, we know that community colleges serve a need training skilled trade workers, and now the health care system needs to rely on community colleges to bolster a homegrown health care workforce too. We know that Oregon is a net importer of health care workers, this bill seeks to increase opportunities for Oregonians and allow communities to build upon local workforce programs.

PeaceHealth enjoys a relationship with Lane Community College and is proud to support the registered nurse program. Our financial contribution to the program allows LCC to accept up to 20 additional applicants per cohort. We know by the high number of applications received by LCC for the RN program that a BSN program is likely to yield significant interest in our region of the state.

PeaceHealth encourages your support of SB 523. The technical clarification to allow the HECC to approve BSN programs at community colleges is a positive step to increasing access to much needed BSN training opportunities. PeaceHealth stands committed to partnering in the workforce development conversation and supports other efforts such as expanded graduate medical education availability in Oregon, to continue to grow Oregon's health care workforce.

Thank you for your continued interest in health care education and for supporting the growth of Oregon's health care workforce.

Sincerely,

**Todd Salnas** | Chief Executive | PeaceHealth Oregon Network