

Senate House Education Committee
Oregon State Capital

To Chair Dembrow and Members of the Senate Higher Education Committee

I am sending this letter in support for SB523, asking that the committee establish criteria for community colleges to offer BSN programs. I am the VP of Patient Services at Samaritan North Lincoln Hospital in Lincoln City, and we rely heavily on our local community college to provide essential healthcare workers, especially RNs. Personally, I have 30 years of nursing experience and started my career with an ADN which I earned at a community college in rural western KS. I completed my BSN followed by a master's in healthcare leadership and a MBA outside of my community, which was the only option to achieve my goal of obtaining higher education.

Currently in Lincoln City our pipeline of nurses, just like other rural healthcare facilities, is through our local community colleges which currently offers an ADN program, students that desire a BSN must leave their rural communities to achieve their goal and frequently they do not return to the community. They are recruited away by the facilities that provide them clinical experiences and they have four years to settle into their new surroundings and develop new friendships.

Through SB523 the community colleges would be able to offer BSN programs to nurses that are currently leaving the area to obtain their bachelor's degrees, or who are relying on the online programs to gain their BSNs post completion of the ADN program. This is important to communities based on:

- the studies that have shown improved outcomes with nurses that have obtained a higher level of education.
- The IOMs recommendation that hospitals should strive for 80% of their nurses to be BSN, while in the state the rate is 61 – 62% BSN the rate in rural hospitals is significant less.
- The BSN is the gateway for a nurse to advance into leadership or nursing education or advance into a provider position. With their BSN they can enroll in graduate level education which offers them additional opportunities in healthcare. By the time the nurse achieves their advance degree they are seeking opportunities in the community, which furthers the benefit.

I would like to share that as the VP of Patient Services and the CNO for North Lincoln Hospital the nurses that are being educated through OCCC in Lincoln County are exceptional nurses, they are very simple to onboard, and they have a very good retention rate. The ability for them to continue and achieve their BSN will be a major asset for Lincoln County and the hospitals on the coast. This option will also allow us to attract nursing student that desire a BSN to the coast for their college experience allowing them time to acclimate to the region, build relationships and complete clinicals in our facilities and communities.

As a nursing leader in Oregon, I am asking that you please pass SB523 allowing community colleges in the State of Oregon to offer BSN programs, I appreciate your time and consideration.

Respectfully

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