



Rogue Community College  
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March 1, 2023

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

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

As president of Rogue Community College on behalf of the students and communities we serve, I am writing in full support of SB 523 concerning the Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

Rogue Community College (RCC) has been a key foundation to the nursing workforce of Southern Oregon through our career ladder nursing programs. We offer students entry-level training as nursing assistants up through the completion of a two-year Associate Degree–Nursing (ADN), which prepares students to become certified as registered nurses. Our partnership with regional health care employers is strong with all parties hoping for expansion of these training opportunities to meet the growing shortage of nursing staff at all levels in our region and state.

While all Oregon community colleges are currently able to offer a Bachelor of Applied Science—Nursing (BAS-N) following the passage in 2019 of SB3, the BAS-N degree does not, in fact, align with nursing boards and industry partners – both of which recognize and require for employment, the Bachelor of Science-Nursing (BSN). SB523 would correct this misalignment while utilizing our existing cost-effective community college training programs to produce more advanced-skill-level nurses who can go on to serve communities in which they already live.

The accessibility and affordability of community college for these nurse trainees will ease nursing shortages in non-metro areas in particular. By building the workforce from within community college district residents, rather than sending these students to metro areas for training, community colleges can ensure a higher likelihood of keeping these key workforce members local to address our higher regional workforce needs and limited human resources.

Additionally, the ability for nursing students to gain their BSN following their ADN with their own community college increases equity. The costs to attend expensive online BSN programs or to relocate to university-based programs, by definition, preclude students from lower-income households from pursuing this option. Additionally, students from cultural backgrounds that prioritize maintaining proximity to family can maintain those connections by attending college close to home.

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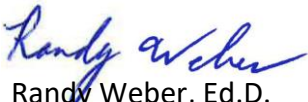
Senate Higher Education Committee

Community colleges have a mission to serve students from all backgrounds and to assist those who might otherwise not have the ability to pursue alternate training options. Our doors are open to all and our enrollments include older students (55% are between 25 and 64), low-income students (36% receive federal Pell grant assistance) and those who identify as “first-in-family” to attend college (22%). The students we train align with the top retention efforts of our health care partners. They tell us they are seeking a workforce representative of our communities and one with deep roots to our regions. Community colleges are prepared to take on this additional degree option in judicious response to local need and in cooperation with universities and other education providers who may share student populations. Sixteen out of 17 colleges already offer the two-year ADN. These colleges have the Master’s level faculty in place required to teach the BSN program and have the partnerships with regional health care partners to manage the clinical training sites. For ADN programs in Oregon, the rate of successful completion of the Registered Nurse (RN) certification exam is 85.8% (2021 data), on par with existing Oregon BSN programs (86.4%).

SB 523 supports a cost-effective use of existing resources, advances equity, ensures affordable skill development for students seeking advanced nurse training and expands workforce pipelines in non-metro areas.

I highly encourage your support of this bill on behalf of the students we serve and the health care partners who are seeking to strengthen their pool of qualified employees.

Respectfully,



Randy Weber, Ed.D.

President