

Submitter: Ken Hector  
On Behalf Of: Chemeketa Community College  
Committee: Senate Committee On Education  
Measure: SB523

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the Senate Committee on Education:

I am a publicly elected member of the Chemeketa Community College Board of Education, representing Zone 4, which includes parts of Marion and Linn Counties. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of SB 523.

When the hearing on March 2 concluded without my name being called to testify, I was disappointed. However, upon reflection I saw it as a positive. Much of my prepared remarks were articulated by others, so this gave me the opportunity to modify my testimony in response to the testimony of those in opposition to SB 523, which was solely from the four year universities with nursing programs, specifically OHSU, George Fox, and Linfield.

SB 523 is not about community colleges. It is about Students, Healthcare, Community and Workforce. Unfortunately, the above universities would have you believe that they only they alone are capable of providing nursing students with a bachelors degree. Nationally the estimate is a shortage of 800,000+ nurses. By their own testimony, they acknowledge that a shortage of nursing educators is one of the key chokepoints in the postsecondary nursing pipeline. Nursing educators must have at least a Masters in Nursing (MSN) degree, and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) is required to enter an MSN program. While passage of SB 523 won't immediately increase the number of nurses, it will increase the number of nurses with an BSN who can then enter MSN programs.

The opposition testimony also criticized the Community Colleges that do not use the Oregon Consortium Nursing Education (OCNE) curriculum, which was created by OHSU in partnership with some Community Colleges. Its purpose was to enable students to obtain their RN degree at a Community College and then transfer to OSHU's online program as RN to BSN students. Not all Community Colleges joined the Consortium, including Chemeketa, Linn Benton, Oregon Coast and Klamath Falls. Since then some have pulled out of OCNE, and others are considering it. It is significant, I believe, that the passage rates on the RN certification exam are nearly the same for students from both curricula at about 86%, which I submit attests to the quality of Community College nursing programs. At Chemeketa, our rate is consistently near or at 100%. Under our curriculum, a student who completes the 1st year can sit for the NCLEX-PN exam in order to obtain the LPN certification, while under OCNE they can't as it lacks a PN exit.

In addressing the Nursing Educator shortage issue, passage of SB 523 will provide better, more equitable opportunities for our students, many of whom are non-traditional, underserved, often marginalized populations, as education at Community Colleges is a more accessible, affordable option. Additionally, pursuing a BSN at a Community College creates a local option for these RN graduates to continue their education with familiar faculty, learning environments, student supports, and - critically- a more affordable career pathway than currently exists. Finally, all nursing programs that result in an RN licensure require masters prepared nurse educators, which means that Community College nursing faculty already have the credentials necessary to teach to the BSN.

I am hard-pressed to understand the opposition to what our employers and workforce partners are asking of us. As such, I again ask for your support of SB 523. It will make a difference for students, our communities, and for healthcare in Oregon.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Ken Hector  
Chemeketa Board of Education