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Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St. NE,  
Salem Oregon 97301

Good afternoon Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Weber and members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on SB 523 and the impacts such a change would have on Oregon's nursing education system.

Nursing education is fragmented in the U.S., affording multiple paths, which on the one hand can increase access and on the other lead to disconnected experiences for students. The Oregon Consortium for Nursing Education, also known as OCNE, was a landmark accomplishment co-designed by community college and university faculty in 2002 to create a seamless pathway for students to earn associates and baccalaureate nursing degrees through one admission process.

OCNE affords students mobility across community colleges and regional universities with standardized pre-requisite coursework and a single 3-year nursing curriculum. The common pre-requisites, co-admission, and shared curriculum amount to a seamless progression through nursing education, creating accessible, affordable baccalaureate nursing education opportunities in every corner of our geographically diverse state. In fact, students are co-admitted to OHSU's RN-to-BSN program at the same time they are admitted to the community college program. These students can continue to the online BSN program and do the vast majority of their BSN coursework without ever leaving their home community. OCNE meets students where they are.

SB 523 is unfortunately likely to fragment nursing education in Oregon in a way that doesn't best serve students or the state.

The coordination and collaboration of the OCNE model also benefits faculty. We have many new and early career faculty who need development and support as they learn the science of teaching and learning, how to design and deliver courses, and build and evaluate curricula. In addition to a robust, newly developed faculty mentoring program, OCNE offers faculty rich and deep resources for courses and opportunities for programs to support one another because of the standardized curriculum.

OCNE was thoughtfully organized to allow for the retention of autonomy for OCNE partner schools. Each maintains its autonomy and accountability for its degree program. Each is individually approved by the Oregon State Board of Nursing, and faculty teaching the OCNE

curriculum choose their own textbooks, teaching methods, and learning management systems. Early on, the creators of OCNE recognized the importance of each individual program's leadership and expert understanding of local student, workforce, and community needs. The consortium sought to support and build upon this expertise to ensure that communities and students across Oregon are achieving the best outcomes from nursing education and workforce.

OCNE is managed by two co-directors: one is a member community college, and one at OHSU's School of Nursing. The OCNE program office provides tools for faculty collaboration across distances and access to information, and manages the ongoing development and quality improvement of the consortium.

We know the nursing education system is not producing enough nurses to meet Oregon's needs. Community college associate's degree in nursing (ADN) programs and traditional nursing baccalaureate programs do need to grow capacity so we can educate more nurses. As OCNE co-chairs, we travel the state and meet with every OCNE partner to understand their needs and challenges. Nursing program directors at community college partner programs consistently report the lack of nurse faculty as the primary limiting factor to expanding their programs. This is not a new problem. For many years, Oregon has seen its nursing education cohort sizes reduced directly due to inability to secure nurse faculty.

SB 523 bill is unlikely to increase education capacity or produce substantially greater numbers of registered nurses. It duplicates pathways that already exist and does not address the current limitations to growing community college ADN and traditional baccalaureate nursing programs.

OCNE is the best example of what Oregonians can do when we employ the Oregon Way, a path of collaborative and innovative problem solving and shared success that empowers nursing faculty and students in communities and institutions across the state to leverage our collective power. While SB 523 may be read to merely allow additional options for BSN nursing education, ultimately it tilts the scales away from this innovative model and away from the Oregon Way.

Sincerely,



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