

March 30, 2023

To: The House Committee on Behavioral Health & Health Care Committee

Fr: Janie Griffin, MN, RN
Dean of Nursing and Health Occupations
Columbia Gorge Community College

Re: House Bill 3324

I strongly support House Bill 3324!

The nursing shortage across Oregon is critical and the health care of all Oregonians is being greatly impacted, especially in the rural areas. In the Columbia Gorge region health clinics have reduced service hours and some have even closed, the hospitals have closed units and reduced the number of beds due to the nursing shortage and loss of other health care providers. In an effort to help the community increase the number of qualified nurses in the area, Columbia Gorge Community College, (CGCC) would like to increase the number of students admitted to our nursing program but due to shortage of available qualified nursing faculty and administrators we are not able to put this into effect.

The program has posted, for over a year, a position for a full-time qualified nursing faculty, with no applicants. When speaking with nurses in the area who might be interested in a teaching position they tell us, "we cannot afford them," the college does not have the funds to meet the salary or hourly income the nurses working in the hospital are making. We are also having difficulty finding part time nursing clinical instructors, who are qualified to teach our students in the clinical setting, which is a vital component to the education of our nurses. With the advent of retirement, of those who are teaching (3 of the 5-present faculty at CGCC), and not having new faculty to mentor into those positions the program will be faced with a serious shortage and may be pushed to reduce student numbers due to lack of faculty.

Presently at CGCC, we have one faculty administrator, who had planned to retire this past year and graciously agreed to stay on and teach as well as mentor a new faculty for the year. This "retired administrators' position was filled, after 6 months of searching, with a retired nurse administrator who decided to return to education to fill the gap. The program also has, for this year, two part time retired nursing faculty who are teaching several of the theory classes to meet the needs of the program. Those who are retired would like to "retire" but feel the need to help out with the critical shortage of faculty being felt by the program. This is not the best solution but one that filled the needs for qualified faculty. All this may end at the end of the school year, as those retired, may elect to truly retire. The program continues our efforts to recruit qualified nurses into the educational arena and hopefully with an incentive provided by this bill we may be able to hire new faculty.

The colleges need help, financially, to recruit, hire and maintain faculty. If we are to meet the needs of health care in the present and the future something must be done to encourage qualified nurses to enter into educating our future nurses. Passage of this bill will be a step in the right direction for helping secure health care for all Oregonians.

Sincerely,
Janie Griffin, MN, RN

