



Chair Nosse, Vice Chair Goodwin and Nelson, and members of the committee,

All session nurses and nurse practitioners across Oregon have been following discussions taking place this legislative session about the nursing shortage we face. An issue highlighted over and over is the shortage of nurse educators, which leads to a bottleneck of potential nursing students able to join nursing programs. The top reason for highly qualified nurses not joining faculty is they must take a pay cut to move to academia. This comes on top of the cost of higher education for nurses to become qualified to teach and leaves nurse educators overwhelmed with student loan debt. House Bill 3324 is a solution for addressing the pay disparities for the people working in our nursing programs across the state.

Currently I am chair of NPO but as former chair of the House Healthcare Committee, I convened a group of advocates invested in addressing the nursing crisis which resulted in the passage of HB 4003. With information from the House Bill 4003 report and numbers from the Oregon State Board of Nursing, we know there are over 5,000 Registered Nurses in Oregon who have a Master's degree or higher. This means we have nurses that are qualified to teach but many cannot afford to take a pay cut. We must find solutions and offer better pay for the people who are training the future nurses of our healthcare system.

HB 3324 - 1 will establish the Nurse Educator Workforce Stipend Program with a \$16 million general fund to provide increase the recruitment and retention of nurse faculty positions and nursing program administrators at accredited institutions of post-secondary education in Oregon, including but not limited to increasing salaries.

Outside of increase in salaries using state general funds, I urge all invested in this topic to consider creative models where hospitals & clinics partner with community colleges and universities to create more positions for practicing nurses. Nurse faculty positions can follow in the footsteps of a model used by medical schools and practicing physicians for decades and incentivize practicing nurses time to teach. Balancing practice with an academic job can be fulfilling. It gives practicing faculty variety in their work and the ability to find appreciation and fulfillment in both roles. The balance and diversity of work keeps it fresh. Students receive the benefit of learning from someone who has current work experience in the field. This also helps offset financial disparity between practice and faculty roles.

NPO urges your support for House Bill 3324. Thank you for your commitment to supporting nurses and the communities they serve.

Sincerely,
Rachel Prusak, NPO Board chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rachel Prusak". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "P".