



Senate Higher Education Committee
Oregon State Capitol

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

I am writing in full support of SB523 concerning the Bachelor of Science in Nursing. As a graduate of OHSU School of Nursing, current faculty at Oregon Coast Community College, and lifetime resident of Lincoln County I believe in the strength of rural communities and community education.

In 2019, SB3 gave community colleges the ability to offer applied baccalaureate (BAS) degrees if authorized by the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC). However, if colleges are to offer a bachelor-level component in nursing, further legislation is needed in order to call the nursing degree a BSN, which is the industry and regulator-recognized title, rather than a BAS-N, which is not recognized by employers and nursing boards.

- A community college option for earning a BSN degree would increase access to four-year nursing degrees across Oregon and particularly in rural areas such as Lincoln County. In rural areas, where there are well-documented so-called “health care deserts,” having a viable local and affordable option for nursing students to obtain credentials and educationally advance is critical to meeting health care needs.
- Our nursing faculty work in the community in a variety of roles including clinical instruction, bedside nursing, and community health. From that perspective, we are on the front lines of the current nursing shortage crisis, often working multiple jobs in multiple roles to help meet the needs of our communities. We are in dire need of more nurses at all levels of education and the faculty at community college is qualified, willing, and available to help meet this need.
- Many community college RN graduates are paying more expensive out-of-state, online providers to attain a BSN. Local community college alternatives would provide a lower-cost option. Rural areas, like the communities served by Oregon Coast Community College, often see students leave for higher education and not come back. Offering BSN education where students currently live, work, and raise their families, would increase the number of BSN prepared nurses in the areas where they are needed most.

- If community colleges were able to offer the BSN, it would provide a valuable local option to RN graduates who are not pursuing the BSN to continue their education with familiar faculty, learning environments, student supports and - critically - a more affordable career pathway than currently exists. We work closely with students and our communities. Often working with students in high school programs, during prerequisites, and as colleagues in CNA, LPN, and CMA positions. We know our students and have a deep commitment to their success at all levels of their nursing careers.
- An RN-to-BSN program from a community college will provide the opportunity for more equitable outcomes for underserved, often marginalized populations, as education from community colleges is a more accessible, affordable option. Providing education to community members at the community level will help us develop nurses that fully represent the communities they serve.
- Almost all Community colleges in Oregon currently offer 2-year Associate Degrees in Nursing (ADN) with a very successful track record for students. Successful completion of the Registered Nurse (RN) certification exam in 2021 is 85.8% for ADN programs statewide compared to 86.4% for BSN programs. This is a negligible difference and demonstrated the ability of community college nursing faculty to provide quality education for nurses.
- While it is true that clinical space is limited for nursing education programs, most of the bedside training in a hospital or other setting takes place in the first two years for the RN degree. In fact, an RN to BSN program does not require clinical training. We work closely with our communities and have strong clinical partnerships that are both willing to help and asking for this service. We need more BSN trained nurses in our community and we are in a position to help meet this need.
- All nursing programs that result in RN licensure require master's prepared nurse educators, which means that community college nursing faculty already have the credentials necessary to teach to the BSN. Many of us teach or have previously taught at the university level. Educating students at the BSN level is well within the scope of practice of community college faculty and will provide additional options and increased availability to students in all levels of nursing education.

I am in full support of SB523 and feel that it is extremely beneficial for students, workforce needs, and our community. I strongly urge you to sign on to SB523 and support higher level skills in a critical field. Please help us continue to meet the needs of our rural and underserved communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

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Nursing Faculty & Clinical Coordinator
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