



Chair John Lively, Vice-Chair Emily McIntire, Vice-Chair Ricki Ruiz, and  
Members of the House Higher Education Committee  
Oregon State House  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR, 97301

RE: Concerns with SB 523

Dear Chairs and Members of the House Higher Education Committee:

Senate Bill 523 proposes to permit Oregon's Community Colleges to offer a Bachelor's of Science in Nursing (BSN). I am writing to stand in opposition with the Oregon Alliance of Independent Colleges and Universities (The Alliance) and fellow four-year BSN nursing deans. Our position is that SB 523 does not address the nursing shortage in Oregon. Worse, SB 523 could potentially exacerbate the existing nursing faculty shortage. In particular, the handout in support of the bill, titled "BSN-One-Pager," documents that only 7 percent of Oregon's nursing workforce currently hold master's or higher degrees. As a result, Oregon's four-year BSN degree programs have chronically vacant faculty positions.

Other concerns raised include:

- **Lack of clinical placements and shortage of qualified faculty. These elements are the main obstacles** in community colleges conferring BSN degrees, not program capacity or geography (most BSN completion programs are available online).
- **The wage gap and nursing faculty retention.** According to the [Oregon Longitudinal Data Collaborative's \(OLDC\) "Addressing the Nursing Shortage in Oregon" report](#), when examining the faculty/retention issue, the wage gap between nursing faculty and a nurse practitioner, both of whom require a graduate degree, results in faculty earning approximately \$49,000 less per year. Low nursing faculty salary is the principal cause for recruitment and hiring challenges. Further, states with a higher nursing faculty salary gap graduate fewer students per capita.
- **Costs for accreditation.** The level of accreditation a community college would need to attain to confer a BSN is a significant additional cost to programs that are not already accredited.

**The inability to accept more students in current programs is attributed to a lack of nursing faculty and clinical placements, not to the ability for ADNs to attain a BSN.** Many existing programs worth building upon would do more to address the lack of qualified nurses than allowing community colleges to confer BSN degrees:

- The Oregon Consortium of Nursing Education (OCNE) is a statewide partnership of Oregon nursing programs involving eleven community colleges, OHSU's five regional campuses, and OHSU's RNBS online completion program. [OHSU received a \\$45 million investment from the legislature in 2022 to fund its 30-30-30 plan](#) to help address the state's urgent healthcare workforce needs. This investment allows OHSU to expand class sizes and graduate additional and more diverse health care professionals, such as nurses, through OCNE.
- The Schools of Nursing at several Alliance member institutions maintain articulation agreements with various community college programs and provide an affordable pathway to earning a BSN. These programs have room to accept more students.



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- Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) graduates have a plethora of flexible and affordable options for RN to BSN programs, not only in Oregon but also through accredited online programs across the country. Oregon does not need more RN to BSN programs; this pursuit potentiates the faculty shortage issue for prelicensure needs.
- All of these existing programs address expanding regional access to bachelor's degree programs outlined in Recommendation #3 of the [Oregon Longitudinal Data Collaborative's \(OLDC\) "Addressing the Nursing Shortage in Oregon" report](#).

In 2022, the legislature passed House Bill 4003, directing the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to create the [Nursing Workforce Study](#). This study, funded by the legislature, provides an extensive, data-driven analysis of the nursing workforce issues we currently face, as well as excellent conclusions.

The culminating recommendations of that study provide a clear strategy for addressing the issues, and **none of those recommendations includes community colleges conferring a BSN degree**. If stakeholders are going to address our nursing workforce challenges strategically, we are best served through following the recommendations of the report the legislature has already commissioned. Putting limited resources toward initiatives that are not deemed to solve the problem are simply not a prudent use of public funds.

Finally, the goal of increasing students graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing aligns with the state. The Alliance and nursing deans of member institutions see nursing as an area where transfer pathways and continued partnership between community colleges and four-year universities is successfully working throughout the state. In solidarity with these nursing deans, I look forward to continuing work with stakeholders to address the barriers needed to close the gap in Oregon's nursing workforce demand.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Campbell".

Linda Campbell, PhD, RN, CNS, CNE  
Dean and Professor, Department of Nursing



The baccalaureate degree program in nursing at Warner Pacific University is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (<http://www.ccneaccreditation.org>).