

Submitter: Joan Ching
On Behalf Of: St Charles Health System
Committee: House Committee On Higher Education
Measure: SB523

April 21, 2023

To the House Committee on Higher Education:

I am writing in full support of SB523 concerning the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN). As the largest healthcare provider in Central Oregon, St. Charles Health System is a local partner of Central Oregon Community College (COCC) and desperately needs more Bachelors-prepared RNs. We have been unable to fill approximately 200 RN positions on hospital nursing units and must resort to paying expensive agencies to fill the gap. This has hurt all our communities' access to care and is not a long-term viable solution. There are three reasons why I support this bill:

First, if community colleges were able to offer BSN, it would provide a valuable local option to RN graduates who are not currently pursuing a BSN. They could continue their education with familiar faculty, learning environments, student supports and -- critically -- a more affordable career pathway than currently exists. They could even do so and continue to work for us.

Second, A RN-to-BSN program from a community college could provide underserved, often marginalized populations the opportunity for more equitable outcomes. What we want to see is more students from communities like Redmond, Prineville and Madras attain their BSN & stay in their community for as long as they are willing. Wouldn't it be great if Jefferson County was able to offer a BSN when COCC launches a new health careers program in its new instructional facility?

Finally, research has shown increasing the proportion of BSN-prepared nurses on hospital units is linked to fewer patient deaths and patient readmissions. This is good for patients and for nurses. Nurses with higher levels of education are able to secure higher wages and make nursing a sustainable and fulfilling career.

Our community, like so many others, is facing a severe shortage of healthcare workers. Without a trusted partner like COCC, there is little chance we can meet the growing needs for wellness care in our tri-county region. COCC's ability to offer a BSN will be an added bonus.

Thank you for your consideration,

Joan Ching, RN, DNP, CPHQ

Chief Nurse Executive
St. Charles Health System
Bend, OR