

April 25, 2023

The Honorable John Lively, Chair  
House Committee on Higher Education

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Chair Lively, Members of the Committee:

Salem Health is a non-profit organization with facilities that include Salem Hospital, West Valley Hospital in Dallas, and Salem Health Medical Group primary and specialty clinics spread throughout the mid-Willamette Valley. Salem Health serves patients in Marion and Polk, as well as from Benton, Lincoln, and Yamhill counties.

You heard from one of my colleagues earlier this session about cross-industry workforce shortage. As you may be aware, we feel that shortage keenly in acute care settings where lifesaving care is provided every day.

Salem Hospital is one of the few in Oregon that has earned a Magnet designation. This requires us to place special priority on Bachelor of Science: Nursing degrees. We support our nurses personally, professionally, and financially to earn their BSN.

We have a robust partnership with Chemeketa Community College. Their graduates work in virtually every department at Salem Health; and we are proud that these incredible employees chose to work with our organization. We are committed to strengthening our relationship because Chemeketa is equally committed to our mission of improving the health and wellbeing of the communities we jointly serve. They are a key part of our organizational strategy to grow our own workforce, and we appreciate them being financially and culturally accessible to a diverse range of students. Additionally, their advocacy and support for SB 523 is evidence of their willingness and ability to match our pace of innovation and quality standards.

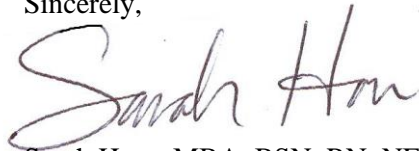
Prospective nursing students today compete for limited nursing school slots. Many are forced to rely on expensive, out-of-state programs, or wait to be selected in future class lotteries. Community college BSN options would create low-cost alternatives and additional pathways to a nursing career.

An RN-to-BSN program from a community college would potentially provide the opportunity for more equitable outcomes for underserved, often marginalized populations, simply because education from community colleges is a more accessible, affordable option. At Chemeketa Community College, 57% of nursing graduates over the last five years did not go on to earn a BSN. If community colleges were able to offer the BSN, students could continue their education with familiar faculty, learning environments, and student supports, not to mention clinical placement opportunities with local health care systems like Salem Health.

SB 523 passed out of the Senate with unanimous, bi-partisan support. I hope that you will join me and Salem Health in supporting this bill.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about our efforts to expand our health care workforce. I'm happy to answer any questions that you might have. SB 523 passed out of the Senate with unanimous, bi-partisan support. I hope that you will join me and Salem Health in supporting this bill. Thank you for taking the time to learn about our efforts to expand our health care workforce.

Sincerely,



Sarah Horn, MBA, BSN, RN, NE-BC, RNC-LRN

Senior Vice President, Chief Nursing & Clinical Operations Officer