



School of Nursing  
Office of the Dean  
Mail Code SN-ADM  
3455 SW U.S. Veterans Hospital Rd.  
Portland, OR 97239-2941  
t 503-494-7444  
f 503-494-5165  
w [ohsu.edu/son](http://ohsu.edu/son)

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House Committee on Higher Education  
Oregon Legislature  
Salem, OR 97301

Good afternoon. Chair Lively, Vice Chair McIntire, Vice Chair Ruiz and members of the committee. For the record, my name is Susan Bakewell-Sachs and I have the honor of serving as Dean of the School of Nursing at Oregon Health and Science University. I am also a proud nurse of 44 years.

Let me begin by saying that I whole heartedly support this focus on baccalaureate and higher degrees for nurses. You likely know that patients in our hospitals are very sick. This high level of illness in hospitals requires well-educated registered nurses who have the knowledge, skills, and competence to clinically reason and save lives. Baccalaureate and higher degree preparation of nurses has been shown in multiple studies to improve patient outcomes. As you have heard, it is also good for individual nurses to be able to advance in their careers.

OHSU is the state's public health care education university and has served for decades as a partner in Oregon's coordinated nursing education model that centers students and their pathway through nursing education. OHSU partners to offer BSN degrees on four physical public university campuses in Ashland, Klamath Falls, La Grande and Monmouth, and offers a statewide online RN/BS in nursing degree completion program. I am proud to share that our baccalaureate program is 31% underrepresented students due to the efforts we have undertaken and remain committed to continuing. Four years ago we reduced the tuition of our RN to bachelors completion program by 37% because we share the concern of student financial burden. We are also a member of the Oregon Consortium for Nursing Education (OCNE) which is a partnership of 10 community colleges and five university campuses across Oregon plus the OHSU RN to BSN program. The consortium has supported a seamless curriculum for an associate to baccalaureate degree path for nursing students and faculty development for over 20 years. More than 90% of our undergraduate students are from Oregon and over 70% of our alumni have remained in Oregon over the decades.

I'm here today to share our concern that SB 523 as written would move Oregon toward a model of nursing education that disincentivizes collaborative and streamlined approaches that benefit students. We have statewide challenges that need statewide, collaborative solutions such the OCNE consortium offers.

OHSU understands better than most how badly hospitals and health care facilities need nurses right now. We are one of those impacted hospitals. We, like everyone else, are desperate to hire more nurses. **Unfortunately, SB 523 is unlikely to add new nurses to Oregon's workforce.** There is not currently a lack of spaces available in Oregon-based RN-to-BSN programs and many programs are online, providing existing options today for students to remain local.



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As you have heard already, there is a real limitation in available seats in current community college RN programs and full BSN programs as a result of long-standing challenges in recruitment and retention of nurse faculty and limitations of local clinical education opportunities. OHSU supports legislation being considered under consideration this session to address these two issues directly and we would stand in strong support of any proposals or investment requests community colleges might have of the legislature to help them grow the number of RN students they can graduate.

I strongly support baccalaureate and higher degrees for nurses. I oppose the approach of SB 523, however, because moving away from collaboration and coordination will reduce student mobility, isolate nurse faculty in individual programs, limit shared nurse faculty development and the opportunity to share faculty across programs, and fragment nursing education in Oregon. If the legislature wants to create the option for more individual RN-to-BSN programs as laid out in SB 523, we would ask that you ensure the legislation requires common curriculum and seamless transfer among all public programs and that the cost to students remains low.

We understand that the Legislature has asked higher education to streamline academic pathways for students through improved transferability and common course numbering. Nursing students should also maintain the benefit of a clear and easily transferrable pathway to their degree. This bill should therefore follow the overall direction the legislature has set forth for higher education in streamlining academic programs for students, reducing duplication, and reducing the expense and time for students of lost credits.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Bakewell-Sachs". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susan Bakewell-Sachs, PhD, RN, FAAN  
Vice President for Nursing Affairs and Dean