

TO: House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care
FROM: Brent Wilder
Oregon Alliance for Independent Colleges and Universities
DATE: February 5, 2024
RE: Support for HB 4011 – Sections 27 and 28

The Oregon Alliance of Independent Colleges and Universities (The Alliance) is the voice of Oregon's independent, non-profit higher education sector, actively supporting the success of our member colleges and universities, their students, and alumni.

The Retaining and Elevating the Nurse Educator Workforce (RENEW) initiative at the Oregon Center for Nursing, established in 2023 with the passage of HB 3396, is an excellent public investment aimed at stabilizing and increasing faculty in Oregon to ultimately grow the number of new students able to attend and complete nursing programs within Oregon to match the demand of the nursing workforce.

According to a 2023 report produced by the Oregon Longitudinal Data Collaborative (OLDC) titled [Postsecondary Healthcare Education Shortage in Oregon – Addressing Oregon's Nursing Shortage Through Expansion of Postsecondary Opportunities for Students](#), in Oregon, across all 21 public and private institutions that offer registered nursing programs, only 4 programs accepted more than 50% of qualified applicants. Why? A lack of clinical placements available for nursing students and **an insufficient number of nursing faculty**.

The greatest limiting impact is the difficulty in identifying and retaining nursing faculty. According to the OLDC report, when examining the faculty/retention issue, there is a wage gap between nursing faculty and nurses in clinical practice. Nursing faculty earn nearly \$49,000 less per year than their counterparts in healthcare, adjusted for cost of living. There is a statistically significant relationship between this pay gap and the ability of nursing programs to produce graduates in the western United States. The larger the wage gap, the fewer the students who can graduate. The regression model suggests that nursing faculty would need a salary increase of \$6,139 for 9-month faculty salaries to be competitive enough to attract them from the healthcare setting into the classroom.

Current capacity is not meeting the needs of Oregon's prospective qualified nursing students. HB 3396 established the RENEW initiative by providing \$5 million in funding to help nursing programs at Oregon's public education institutions only to help address faculty recruitment and retention.

Over 40% of nursing graduates come from private institutions and are essential to helping address Oregon's nursing workforce needs. Sections 27 & 28 of HB 4011 would expand the Retaining and Elevating the Nurse Educator Workforce (RENEW) initiative at the Oregon Center for Nursing to include Oregon's private institutions, all of which are active OCN partners, in future allocations for this initiative, including the \$5 million in additional funds requested for this crucial effort.

This is a professional area that Oregon must improve upon, and Oregon's private institutions must be a part of this important, targeted effort!

Thank you for your consideration.