

February 5, 2024

House Behavioral Health & Health Care Committee
Oregon Legislature

RE: HB 4011

Dear Chairs and Members of the House Behavioral Health & Health Care Committee:

I am the Dean of the School of Nursing and Health Innovations at the University of Portland in Portland, Oregon. Our BSN program accounts for over 25% (210 in 2021) of all BSN graduates statewide, and over 15% of all RN graduates in Oregon. Hence, I am writing to offer my strong support of the *Retaining and Elevating the Nurse Educator Workforce* (RENEW) initiative at the Oregon Center for Nursing, which is intended to stabilize and increase faculty in Oregon so that more students will be able to attend and ultimately graduate from nursing programs.

In 2023, HB 3396 established the RENEW program and provided funding to help grow nursing programs at the state's public education institutions. In 2024, HB 4011 (Section 27 & 28 Nursing Educators), would expand program participation language to include nursing programs at the state's private education institutions, such as the University of Portland; already a close partner of OCN. To support associated efforts at private institutions, the OCN is requesting an allocation of \$5 million more to RENEW.

At the University of Portland, we admit approximately 250 nursing students each year. It is a continuing challenge to maintain both the numbers and teaching expertise of the nurse educator faculty when there are so many forces pushing against us. These include higher compensation elsewhere, workload, and the heavy lift of transitioning from a clinical setting to academia.

Each year we lose nurse educator faculty to each of the issues just named. Some take much higher paying positions in clinical settings, and some are overwhelmed by the shift to teaching, even with a modicum of mentorship. Also, nurse educators often move from nursing program to nursing program, seeking better pay. This "churnover" that occurs on top of a nurse faculty shortage, is not only costly; it negatively affects the students we are committed to serving.

Just two weeks ago a longtime faculty member let me know she was leaving UP to take a job that significantly raises her pay. It was the ONLY reason she chose to leave. Currently, schools of nursing are not able to compete with such significant salary increases elsewhere. This is why additional funding from HB 4011 would allow us to

offer a competitive salary to retain and elevate faculty members whose value to students, and ultimately to the nursing workforce, is unparalleled.

Further, the result of this particular faculty member leaving will be to create additional pressure on those remaining. With her departure in just a few weeks, those who stay will absorb an additional workload of teaching and advising students for an extended period, because of the nationwide nurse educator shortage. HB 4011 would provide funds to support their commitment, as well as new interventions to support the stability of the nurse educator workforce.

As a private university with a very large school of nursing, UP faces numerous challenges, and at the same time we look forward to participating in the creation of solutions. I trust you will consider these perspectives in support of including private nursing education programs in RENEW, and vote for HB 4011. Our dedicated nursing students and the public they will soon serve deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,



Joane T. Mocerri, PhD, RN
Dean and Professor
School of Nursing and Health Innovations
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