



Rogue Community College

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Testimony in favor of SB754 for Public Hearing February 25, 2019 Senate Committee on Health Care

Chair, Senator Monnes Anderson, Vice-Chair, Senator Linthicum, and members of the committee, I am Linda Wagner, Nursing Department Chair, Rogue Community College, and Co-director, Oregon Consortium for Nursing Education. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in favor of SB754, and would like to express my thanks to Senator Roblan and Representative McKeown for sponsoring this bill.

SB754 would create an income tax credit of \$10,000 (not to exceed the tax liability of the tax payer) for rural nurse faculty members—those instructors and program nurse administrators serving at least 6 months of the year in RN or LPN education programs that are at least 10 miles from any community of 40,000 or more. I respectfully suggest that on line 7 of the first page and line 16 of the second page the word “accredited” be changed to “approved” as the Oregon State Board of Nursing “approves” nursing programs, it does not accredit them.

As of last night, I know 8 of my colleagues from around the state have provided written testimony in support of SB754. They speak of the difficulty that exists around the state—not only in rural areas—of recruiting and retaining qualified nursing faculty. I would like to share information from other areas of the state and also from Rogue Community College that echoes that difficulty in recruiting and retaining nursing instructors. I know our state legislators have been aware of the nurse faculty shortage for several years. I believe we have reached a crisis level of shortage. In fact, if anything could be called an emergency, I believe the nurse educator shortage is a serious emergency.

- In 2016-2017, five Oregon community college nursing programs reduced enrollment because of lack of faculty or known upcoming vacancy.
- Portland Community College dropped admissions to the first year of their program from 82 to 32 nursing students because they had 5 faculty vacancies they couldn't fill. That is a loss to the state of 50 RNs a year—and a loss of significant tax revenue for the state as at least two major healthcare systems in Portland in 2016 started new graduate RNs at a salary of \$72,000-\$73,000/year. Fewer nurse educators means fewer RNs to provide care for Oregonians.

- A snapshot of the status of 12 of the 16 existing community college ADN programs regarding faculty this past October (each sentence is a different program): One program will lose one F-T instructor to retirement in June. Another had 2 F-T faculty vacancies with anticipation of 3 F-T faculty member retirements in June. Another had 1 F-T instructor on Sabbatical and is one instructor short this year. Another program will be lowering enrollment next year. Another had 2 faculty out on FMLA fall term and is anticipating losing 3 faculty members to retirement in June. Another had 1 instructor out on leave. Another had a F-T instructor retire in June 2018 and were unsuccessful in recruiting a replacement so they were one instructor short. That same program's director also retired but the college was unsuccessful in recruiting a replacement so the director agreed to return for this year only. Another program lost 2 P-T instructors who resigned just before fall term. Another program had 1 F-T instructor resign in August and in fall had 2 out on leave. Another program lost 2 F-T and 2 P-T instructors and were only able to recruit 1 F-T instructor. Another program had 1 F-T instructor vacancy and also had 2 faculty on medical leave. Another college is not running their PN program this year because of lack of faculty.
- From data compiled by the Oregon Center for Nursing from the annual program reports submitted to the Oregon State Board of Nursing for the 17/18 academic year, there were 13 instructor vacancies in PN Programs and 33 full-time and 11 part-time instructor vacancies in Associate Degree and higher nursing programs during that academic year.
- According to a document regarding the Nursing Faculty shortage crisis created by the Oregon Center for Nursing (https://oregoncenterfornursing.org/wp-content/uploads/OCN_Publications/Where-Are-They-Now_RN_Final.pdf), from 2011 to 2014, more than one-half (51%) of nurse educators left their nurse educator positions in Oregon. According to a 2014 OCN infographic available at https://oregoncenterfornursing.org/wp-content/uploads/OCN_Publications/Oregon%E2%80%99s-Nurse-Faculty-Challenges.pdf, half of the existing nurse educators in Oregon at that time planned to retire by 2025.
- Oregon Nursing programs graduate about 1400 students each year who become RNs. Additional RNs endorse into RN licensure in Oregon from other states each year, but some estimates indicate a gap (between need and availability) of about 1000 RNs in just a few years. Without adequate numbers of nurse educators in Oregon, that gap won't be filled.
- The 2018 average hourly salary for RNs in RCC's district of Josephine and Jackson County was \$41.05 and average annual salary was \$85,382 according to the Oregon Department of Employment.
- Half of RCC's full-time Nursing instructors will have retired before fall term 2019 starts, and of our part-time instructors for the 19/20 academic year, only one will have 1 year of experience in nursing education—all others will be either just starting or have less than one year of experience in nursing education. That level of turnover

requires significant time and support from the more experienced instructors remaining in the program.

- I regularly have tried to recruit our graduates who have gone on for Bachelor's or Master's degrees to work for us, and have several times been told by those graduates they can't afford to work for us. In the fall, when we were advertising for a F-T instructor to replace one retiring in December, I finally had persuaded one of our graduates, now master's prepared, to apply. She reported to me she opened the application on the college website, saw the salary being offered, and closed the application because she couldn't afford to take a \$30,000 pay cut. Just last week I had offered an applicant a part-time position, only to have her decide that she could not take the position as it would result in increased child care costs for her and if she were to reduce by even one day a week her full-time work in a hospital in order to work for us, she could not afford the increased cost of her health care insurance.
- If our Nursing program does not have a full complement of instructors (another 3 P-T instructors would have to be hired) for clinical lined up for the 2019/20 year by mid-May to June, we will not accept a full cohort of 32 students into the first year of our program. If we can only recruit 1 P-T instructor, we'll only be able to accept 16 students. If we recruit 2 P-T instructors, we'll be able to accept 24 first year students.
- I frequently work 14 hour days to accomplish what needs to be done in my role. If you divide my listed daily salary from the college's pay scale by 14, that's an average of about \$36/hour. My son became an RN in February and works not far from the capitol building. When he told me his salary and what he could make from overtime and weekend work and shift differentials, I calculated it might only take him about 4-5 years to earn what I've built up to in working as a nurse educator at RCC for 29 ½ years.

I support, and ask the state's senators and representatives to support, SB754 as a very much needed start to incentivize nurses to become nurse educators. The tax credit will not solve the reality of pay inequity, but it could be used by instructors to help pay for health care insurance and it could make the difference in a decision someone has to make about staying in the nurse educator role or leaving nursing education.