Testimony on the Oregon Health and Science University Budget HB 5024
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Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the OHSU budget on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association. ONA represents over 15,000 nurses working in communities throughout the state to provide care in almost every setting of our health care sector imaginable—including large urban and critical access hospitals alike as well as as well as school-based clinics and public health settings that serve some of our most vulnerable populations.

State funding for nursing programs at OHSU and within our community colleges is critical to ensure that we develop the adequate nursing workforce needed to meet the steadily increasing demand for qualified providers in our state's health care sector. The OHSU School of Nursing has routinely demonstrated effectiveness through the years in preparing qualified nursing professionals as part of fulfilling this imperative need, as evidenced by the well over 90% of its graduates who currently pass the RN credentialing exam on their first attempt.

The OHSU School of Nursing also provides the baccalaureate degree for the Oregon Consortium for Nursing Education (OCNE) through collaboration with 11 community colleges and five universities statewide to offer high-quality curriculum and education programs for Oregonians to receive nursing degrees across the state, regardless of where they reside geographically. As our health care system continues to prioritize primary and preventive care, there remains an intensifying need for a higher volume of nurses who attain baccalaureate degrees or above. To that end, the Oregon Consortium for Nursing Education is a nationally acclaimed model that importantly offers students a progression through nursing education, which can begin at the community college level and conclude with an advanced degree.

Through OCNE, OHSU has worked to significantly expand Oregon's nursing program capacity and enrollment, especially in rural areas where the need for providers can often be most severe. The program continues to function as an essential pipeline in helping fill these nursing workforce gaps, especially in rural areas, with over 4,000 graduates to date.

The previous 2010 landmark report from the Institute of Medicine on the Future of Nursing continues to serve as an important guiding national blueprint that informs the ongoing work of advancing the nursing profession. As the report underscores the need for increased numbers of nurses to be prepared at the baccalaureate and graduate levels as a continuing imperative in our health care system, the OHSU OCNE program remains well-positioned to help achieve this objective through its streamlined and collaborative approach to providing nursing education.

Lastly, the School of Nursing at OHSU also notably offers a prominent Nurse Midwifery program and trains Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists as well as Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners. These advanced practice specialties play increasingly crucial roles in our state's evolving health care landscape, as growing emphasis continues to be placed on preventative primary and behavioral care.

ONA looks forward to working in continued partnership with the OHSU School of Nursing to help address some of the most imperative issues facing our future workforce in the years ahead and encourages the legislature's continuing support and investment in these vital educational programs moving forward.

Thank you,

Chris Hewitt

Oregon Nurses Association