



Testimony in Support of House Bill 4160

February 3, 2020

House Committee on Education

Deborah Riddick

Good afternoon Chair Doherty, Vice Chairs Alonso Leon and Helt, and members of the committee. My name is Deborah Riddick. I am the Director of Government Relations for the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). We represent 15,000 registered nurses throughout the state and the Nurse Practitioners of Oregon. The ONA supports HB 4160, which would establish a Task Force on Student Success for Underrepresented Students in Higher Education.

It is no secret that Oregon remains one of the least diverse states in the nation; <https://multco.us/file/24874/download>. In 1990, Non-Hispanic Whites made up 90.8% of our population; a decade later that figure well below the national average at 85.5%. Studies have shown that factors such as psychological and behavioral climate, structural and compositional diversity, and historic institutional exclusion all play a significant role in student, success and graduation.

The ONA commends the sponsors of HB HB 4160 for their acknowledgement of these barriers and that the best solution must include community input. Recognizing that human experience is personal, and powerful, this bill begins the serious work to the unearth root causes challenging many students of color. These frequently overlooked students and their families have an opportunity to positively impact structural change. This collaboration offers a space to develop institutional trust and truly make higher learning accessible to every Oregonian. The ONA also supports this bill because the Taskforces success is tied to diversification of our nursing and health care workforce. Patient outcomes improve when the workforce

Practically speaking, educational attainment and health care status are interrelated. The more education you acquire, the better your health status. The healthier you are, the greater your ability engage in the educational process. Both lead to a more productive citizenry and better quality of life. HB 4160 is the first step towards dismantling systemic barriers that will make our State truly more inclusive. The ONA supports this bill and requests that you support it, as well.