

SB 523 A -A2 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Higher Education

Prepared By: Ellen O'Brien, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 4/25, 5/11

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Defines "Bachelor of Science: Nursing" degree. Permits community colleges to offer Bachelor of Science: Nursing degree in addition to applied baccalaureate degrees and to apply to Higher Education Coordinating Commission for approval of proposed Bachelor of Science: Nursing degree program.

FISCAL: Fiscal impact issued

REVENUE: No revenue impact

SENATE VOTE: Ayes, 28; Excused, 2

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Nursing workforce shortage and nursing faculty shortage
- Readiness of community colleges to offer higher division courses

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-A2 Exempts Bachelor of Science: Nursing degree from two-year limitation on programs offered by community colleges.

BACKGROUND:

Senate Bill 3 (2019) authorized the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to approve applications from community colleges to offer [applied baccalaureate programs](#). In approving applications for applied baccalaureate programs, HECC is required to consider criteria established in ORS 350.075 (3)(g), which includes consistency with the college's mission statement, avoiding unnecessary duplication with or undue hardship to other community colleges and public universities, and maximizing the achievement of statewide needs and requirements. Under Senate Bill 523 A, HECC would be required to consider the same factors in approving community colleges' applications to offer a Bachelor of Science: Nursing (BSN).

House Bill 4003 (2022) made changes to nurse licensure and staffing to address the nursing workforce shortage, and also directed the Oregon Health Care Workforce Committee to study Oregon's nursing workforce and submit recommendations to the Legislative Assembly. The resulting 2022 report, [The Future of Oregon's Nursing Workforce: Analysis and Recommendations](#), includes information on the levels of nursing licensure as well as education and training programs available in the state of Oregon. According to the report, five schools, both public and private, offer a pathway for registered nurses (RNs) with an associate's degree in nursing (ADN) to earn a Bachelor of Science: Nursing (BSN). In addition, 11 community colleges have partnered with Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU) to form the Oregon Consortium of Nursing Education (OCNE), which offers a shared curriculum and provides a pathway for students completing the ADN program at a community college to pursue a BSN at OHSU. Since 2014, Oregon has seen increasing enrollment in BSN programs and declining enrollment in ADN programs. While students earning either an ADN or a BSN are eligible for licensure as a registered nurse (RN), many universities report an increase in employer preference for job candidates with a BSN.

[Oregon's Health Care Workforce Needs Assessment 2023](#), prepared by Oregon State University's College of Public Health and Human Sciences and funded by the Oregon Health Authority in accordance with House Bill 3261 (2017), includes a breakdown of the state's nursing workforce and notes longstanding problems with the

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distribution of nurses across health care settings and across counties. The number of graduates from Oregon BSN programs grew substantially from 2015 to 2021, compared to the number of ADN graduates, which remained largely unchanged, and the number of licensed practical nurse (LPN) graduates, which declined by 38% between 2012 and 2021 (pg. 64). However, the assessment also found that "only about 72% of Oregon's annual demand for new RNs is met by graduates of the state's nursing education programs, with the balance made up by an increasing number of RNs from other states gaining Oregon licenses by endorsement" (pg. 68).

Senate Bill 523 A permits community colleges to offer a program leading to a Bachelor of Science: Nursing with approval from the Higher Education Coordinating Commission.