



Greetings,

I am writing this letter in support of SB-523 on behalf of Oregon Coast Community College and the Oregon Community College Association.

I believe firmly that statewide acceptance of a BSN degree is critical to overcoming the lack of available healthcare in our state. As is evidenced in state-wide data, community college nursing programs have an 85.5% completion rate, yet only 62% continue to complete their BSN. This level of education is critical, as the Institute of Medicine Future Nursing Initiative has stated that a BSN rate of 80% or higher would optimize out hospitals.

Higher education can present many barriers: financial limitations, physical accessibility, linguistic or cultural challenges, etc, but evidence is clear that local community colleges can effectively eliminate these barriers by removing the additional cost, need for relocation, and allowing a student to continue to rely on their family and community for support during the academic process. Allowing these students to pursue a higher level of academic achievement in a location where they feel most comfortable, have community supports, and can afford their education is critical to filling much needed nursing positions around our state. The requirements of a BSN educator have already been fulfilled by the current educational staff at these colleges, so there is no need for additional staffing or expense, however, allowing for a BSN at the community college level opens the doors for students to successfully enroll in MSN programs in nursing education, and provides opportunities for additional nursing educators to join the field, when they may not have otherwise been allowed such an opportunity. In a state where the ratio of primary care providers are 1:1,800+, any resistance to improving access to healthcare programs should be looked at with a great deal of skepticism. If our goal is to allow equitable access to care, then we should be equally focused on providing equitable access to care-related education.

I strongly encourage my lawmakers to consider the ramifications of rejecting this bill; the students who would not otherwise be able to attain their academic goals, the communities that would lack sufficient care, and the time and expense wasted on a Bachelor of Applied Science (the alternative if SB-532 is not passed), which is not recognized by the board of nursing or employers. Almost three-quarters of the nursing students who graduated from Oregon Coast Community College in the past 5 years did not go on to pursue a BSN, because this option was unavailable. Let's ask ourselves: what if it had been? We could have had more nurses able to fill the gaps in our struggling healthcare system.

I have been lucky enough to partner with Oregon Coast Community College throughout our Covid-19 clinics, and have seen how dedicated, gifted and truly essential they are to our healthcare workforce. I vehemently believe that, if given the opportunity, these students would continue to pursue higher educational goals to be able to better serve their communities. The only barrier to this service is the passing of SB-523. Please pass SB-523, for the good of our nursing students, as well as for the health and wellbeing of the communities they serve.

With deepest gratitude,

Jesse N. Noble

Lincoln County Public Health

Vaccination Coordinator and Harm Reduction Facilitator