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Letter of Support Regarding SB 523 Allowing community colleges to confer a BSN degree.

Dear Senate Committee,

I have been a Registered Nurse for over 45 years in the state of Oregon. I was originally an Associate Degree in Nursing graduate from Southern Oregon State College. I worked for 8 years at Sacred Heart Hospital in Eugene, at that time there was no pathway in Eugene for me to continue my education to earn a BSN (Bachelor of Science in Nursing) degree. I would not be able to advance as a nurse manager or educator without a BSN. Moving out of the community to Portland or Ashland were the only options. There is still no BSN degree available in Eugene.

In Oregon we have 16 community colleges with strong nursing programs serving their local communities, the state, and the nation in producing a steady supply of nurses. As a profession, we want to enable these nurses to earn the credential of a BSN. Associate degree nursing (ADN) programs require the same science base as the BSN degree and take the same Registered Nurse licensing examination.

Having taught for over 10 years at Central Oregon Community College (COCC) as a tenured Nursing Professor, I can share with you that most of our graduates work in the central Oregon area. It is disheartening to see new graduate nurses feeling the pressure to complete a 2nd online degree to stay competitive in the job market. The new graduate nurse is going to gain their critical thinking and clinical skills in their initial nursing program.

The Portland metro area offers many BSN options, that same is not true for rural Oregon and the many individuals that are place bound. We know that in many areas the best way to have nurses stay in the community is to educate individuals already living in the community.

Oregon is known for providing leadership in nursing education, expanding the option for the community colleges to offer BSN degrees will enhance the nursing workforce and make excellent use of existing resources of nursing and science faculty at the community college level.

Thank you,

Nancy Zavacki