

■
**Oregon
Council
Associate
Degree
Nursing &
Practical
Nursing
Programs**

Blue Mountain
Central Oregon
Chemeketa
Clackamas
Clatsop
Columbia Gorge
Klamath
Lane
Linn-Benton
Mt. Hood
Oregon Coast
Portland
Rogue
Southwestern OR
Treasure Valley
Umpqua

TO:

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Suzanne Weber, & Members of the Senate Committee on Education

FROM:

Oregon Council Associate Degree Nursing & Practical Nursing Programs

Date: February 28th, 2023

RE: Support for SB 523

Dear Senators of the State Committee on Education:

The Oregon Council of Associate Degree and Practical Nursing Programs referred to as OCAP, is organized to provide a forum in which deans, directors, and faculty of Associate Degree and Practical Nursing Programs meet periodically to discuss, share, and plan to improve nursing education in the State of Oregon. OCAP is made up of sixteen community colleges throughout the state of Oregon. **Of the sixteen community colleges, thirteen of the community colleges in Oregon support SB 523.**

A community college option for earning a BSN degree would increase access to four-year nursing degrees across Oregon - particularly in rural areas where access to higher education alternatives is limited. In rural areas, where there are well-documented so-called “healthcare deserts,” having a viable local and affordable option for nursing students to obtain credentials and being educationally advanced is critical to meeting healthcare needs.

An RN-to-BSN program from a community college will provide the opportunity for more equitable outcomes for underserved, often marginalized populations, as education from community colleges are a more accessible, affordable option. Educating community members at the community level will help us develop nurses who fully represent the communities they serve and who plan to live and work in the communities in which they receive their BSN education.

At one institution, Chemeketa Community College, 100 out of 175 nursing graduates over the last five years did not go on to earn a BSN. If this (and other) community college(s) were able to offer the BSN, it would provide a valuable local option to RN graduates who are not pursuing the

BSN to continue their education with regular faculty, learning environments; student supports, and – critically – a more affordable career pathway than currently exists.

Today, many community college RN graduates are paying more expensive out-of-state, online providers to attain a BSN. Local community college alternatives provide a lower-cost option. While it is true that clinical space is limited for nursing education programs, most of the bedside training in a hospital or other setting takes place in the first two years for the RN degree. In fact, an RN to BSN program does not require clinical training. We work closely with our communities and have strong clinical partnerships that are willing to help and who are asking for this service. We need more BSN trained nurses in our community and we are in a position to help meet this need.

A community college BSN helps address the nursing shortage by giving more students the credentials they need (a BSN) to continue to a master's degree (MSN), which is required to teach at the RN level. A shortage of nursing educators is one of the critical chokepoints in the postsecondary nursing pipeline.

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) Future of Nursing Initiative has recommended that organizations like hospitals strive to achieve 80% BSN-prepared nurses by 2020. Only 61-62% of Oregon nurses are educated at the BSN level or higher. Allowing community colleges to provide BSN education would increase this percentage.

As you can see, there is already a strong collaboration within the community colleges that focuses on innovating and improving nursing education and healthcare. We, as a council, ask that you sign and support SB 523. SB 523 is crucial to meet the needs of students, the workforce, and our communities. Oregon continues to lead the nation in healthcare because of collaboration and innovation like SB 523.

Thank you,

President:

Crystal Bowman
Oregon Coast Community College

Vice-President (President-elect):

Sandi Kellogg
Chemeketa Community College

Secretary:

Joannie Miller

Southwestern Oregon Community College

Treasurer:

Carri Claycomb

Mt. Hood Community College