



March 2, 2023

To: Senator Michael Dembrow, Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education
RE: Support SB 523; Boost access to BSN Nursing Degrees at Community Colleges

Dear Chair Dembrow and members of the Senate Committee on Education,

Senate Bill 523 opens the door to solving one of our community's most pressing challenges by authorizing the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to approve a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree at community colleges in Oregon.

Our healthcare providers report an urgent and severe nursing workforce shortage impacting our community's overall quality of life. Furthermore, Lane County's concentration of health care employment is higher than state and national averages and according to Oregon Employment Department, demand is forecasted to grow by nearly 4,000 jobs by 2030. *Providing broader, equitable, quality education and earning opportunities for nursing students in Oregon is a path forward to addressing the shortage of credentialed and qualified nurses and why the Springfield Chamber's workforce development initiative supports SB 523.* Senate Bill 523 will:

Provide affordable, equitable education and earning opportunities:

- Community Colleges can offer lower cost options to attain higher-level skills in the nursing field, increasing access to 4-year nursing degrees and more opportunities for promotion.
- Students with access to a BSN have much higher earning potential than those without a 2-year degree, with a \$100,827 average annual wage here in Lane County.
- Education from community colleges is a more accessible and affordable option, making it an ideal choice for students from diverse backgrounds. An RN to BSN program from a community college would create more equitable outcomes for underserved, often marginalized populations.

Increase the pool of qualified instructors:

- A shortage of qualified nursing educators is one of the key chokepoints in the postsecondary nursing pipeline. A community college BSN program would open opportunities for more students to continue to a master's degree (MSN), a requirement to teach at the RN level.

I urge the Committee's support for development of a community college BSN program in Oregon as proposed by SB523.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "V. Mikkelsen", written in a cursive style.

Vonnie Mikkelsen
President and CEO