

March 2, 2023

The Honorable Michael Dembrow, Chair
Oregon Senate Committee on Education
900 Court St. NE, S-407
Salem, OR 97301

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

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 523, which would authorize the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to approve Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degrees at community colleges in Oregon.

As a proud nursing graduate from Lane Community College, I can attest to the benefits of earning an Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) from a community college. However, I also know firsthand the challenges of obtaining a BSN degree after completing my ADN. Like many of my fellow nursing graduates, I had to seek out out-of-state, online providers to attain a BSN. Although OCNE was an option, I determined it was not the best fit for me to continue my education. A community college RN to BSN option would have been my preferred choice.

A community college RN to BSN option would also provide better, more equitable opportunities for students. As a first-generation college student, I understand the barriers that many underserved and marginalized populations face in pursuing higher education. A community college BSN option would provide a more accessible and affordable pathway for these students to advance their education and their careers.

Moreover, a community college BSN would help address the nursing shortage by giving more students the credentials they need to continue on to a master's degree (MSN), which is required to teach at the RN level. The nursing shortage is a critical issue in our healthcare system, and a community college BSN option would help build a skilled workforce and meet the healthcare needs of our communities.

In conclusion, I strongly urge you to support Senate Bill 523 and help create a more accessible, affordable, and equitable pathway for nursing students to earn a BSN degree. A community college RN to BSN option would not only benefit nursing graduates like myself but also the healthcare system and our communities as a whole. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tonya Williamson, RN, BSN
5021 Saxon Way
Eugene, OR 97405