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On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB523

Greetings Senate Committee.

I wish I could be there in person to speak with you, but I hope this written testimony will assist you when considering the applied baccalaureate degree in nursing conferring as Bachelor of Science: Nursing.

I received my ADN from a local community college, went on to complete my Bachelor's at a local private college and for the last ten years I have been working as a nurse at one of our many Oregon hospitals. Presently, my job focuses in education which means that I have the pleasure of working with students from a variety of different schools, new graduate nurses, and current nursing professionals continuing their practice. I feel this lends me a unique perspective on this topic.

Personally, I see great benefits to our community colleges being able to grant a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, namely because they are often the best situated and equipped to assist those students which they already serve. When attending my ADN program, my class was enrichingly diverse. I had classmates that were going back to school for second and third careers, classmates that completed high school early with a GED so they could start in healthcare earlier, recently returned combat veterans, parents, and many folks (myself included) that were still working part or full-time jobs while going to school for much needed incomes. Community colleges understand that these are the realities of their students' lives and have built programs with these things in mind. They are also more affordable than the private 4 year institutions. After graduating from my ADN program, I was able to go on to finish my Bachelor's at one of the many bridge programs available, but that was not an option for several of my classmates and has become increasingly difficult for many of our current students. The combination of costs, the hassle of credits and do not or only partially transfer, and course work that does not account for the often highly irregular schedule of a working new grad creates a combination of what are, for many, ultimately unsurmountable barriers.

This is discouraging at a time when we really need these nurses. Of course, everywhere needs nurses right now, but I am speaking specifically to the nurses that reflect the communities we serve. We need these nurses, and we need them working at the highest level of their capabilities because the more our nursing staff reflects our community and the more these staff are empowered and educated to higher levels of knowledge and understanding, the safer our patients will be and the better we will be as a profession at addressing disparities affecting our patient's social determinants of health.

I know that there are concerns about our overall nursing shortages right now. As a nurse in the hospital I witness these daily. I know that this is one complex issue on the mountain of complex issues in healthcare, and it will require diverse strategies from a variety of avenues to address. As such, I know that this is not going to fix our staffing issues. What it can do, and of this I am confident, is equip a more diverse segment of our nurses with the knowledge and degrees that they need their to progress within this profession and progress the profession as a whole. This has the potential to strengthen our nursing workforce in Oregon and that is something that I would love to see.