

Dear Members of the Oregon Senate,

We are writing today to urge you to vote **yes** on SB 703 which would provide equitable access to the CNA profession in the State of Oregon.

There are multiple reasons to support this bill, not the least of which is that by increasing access to the CNA profession for more diverse candidates, we have an opportunity to improve patient care and safety by increasing the number of licensed CNAs at a time of worker shortages, while also promoting candidates who are able to provide multilingual, culturally competent care to our increasingly diverse citizens of Oregon. This is fully in line with goals already stated by the Oregon Health Authority. Other reasons for support include:

**1. There is a lack of equity between candidates from the state of Oregon and CNAs from neighboring and other states. We currently have CNAs working in our state who did not take the written CNA exam in English. In effect, CNA candidates in Oregon do not have equal access to the profession as CNA candidates in other states.**

- CNAs in CA, WA, and many other states are licensed using the NNAAP exam, which, according to the National Council of State Boards of Nursing website, "is the largest nurse aide certification exam program in the U.S. with over 200,000 paper and practical exams administered annually.
- As stated at <https://www.ncsbn.org/exams/nnaap-and-mace>, "The NCSBN develops the content of the NNAAP and MACE exams and makes it available to a national test service."
- The NNAAP exam provides an opportunity to do a portion of the test in Spanish to replace the English written multiple choice exam
- CNAs who have obtained licensure in any state using the NNAAP exam MAY currently transfer their license to Oregon without any further examination or proof of English language proficiency and work as fully licensed CNAs, as long as they have worked in the other state for 10 weeks FT or 400 hours over a two year period.

**2. Candidates in Oregon have rigorous training in both knowledge and skills IN ENGLISH and will have demonstrated a readiness to be licensed *before* being allowed to take the exam.**

- Candidates must have 80 hours of classroom training in English, with multiple exams, including a comprehensive final exam before they may participate in a 4 week clinical training. The classroom training as well as the teacher providing the training must be approved by the OSBN. *All of this education takes place in English.*
- Candidates who are approved to take the state board exam have already successfully completed the clinical portion of their training under the supervision of an OSBN-approved clinical skills instructor

**3. The examination process is not equitable and is biased against candidates from non-dominant languages and cultures.**

- The current exam is a timed-based, high stakes test. Students whose first language is not English are at a distinct disadvantage. It takes more time to process one's non-dominant language, making it likely that students will need to read faster than normal, and may thus miss answers to questions they actually know.
- The current exam has not been reviewed by experts in cultural competency; it is highly likely that non-medical words and phrases or colloquialisms create barriers to success for immigrants and candidates from non-dominant culture.
- Multiple choice, standardized exams have been widely researched, with much of the research demonstrating that these tests are biased against BIPOC and multicultural candidates. This bias is compounded when someone takes it in their non-dominant language.

**4. Increasing exam accessibility to more and more diverse candidates can help improve CNA care in Oregon and is fully in line with the stated diversity, equity and access goals of the Oregon Health Authority.**

- There is currently a shortage of CNAs while CNA candidates who have passed all of their training, and been successful in clinicals are prevented by a single written exam from doing work which they have already demonstrated over time that they are capable of doing. We need to employ healthcare workers who are committed to the job, not prevent them from entering the career.
- There is a stated desire by the Oregon Health Authority to both improve access to healthcare for a more diverse group of people, but also to improve access to healthcare careers for a more diverse group of people, especially people who can provide care in multiple languages and provide culturally competent care to a population in Oregon which is increasingly more diverse.

**This bill provides an opportunity for the State of Oregon to increase healthcare access for all, to improve patient care by reducing shortages in CNA staffing through a better and more equitable licensure examination process, and to diversify the CNA workforce, allowing more candidates to complete the last part of the process and enter into a healthcare career.**

We strongly urge a YES vote on this bill.

Sincerely,

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