



March 1, 2023

Hello Chair, Vice-Chair, and the Members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Julie Downing and I am an Instructional Dean at Central Oregon Community College (COCC). I have the privilege of overseeing all of the Health Careers programs at COCC, including Nursing. I am **fully in support of SB 523.**

Our healthcare community partners, especially our local health care system – St Charles Health System (SCHS) — desperately needs Bachelor’s-prepared Registered Nurses. Without sufficient locally qualified candidates, these partners are spending a tremendous amount of money employing traveling nurses to meet their current needs.

At COCC, we educate Associate degree-prepared RNs (ADNs) who deserve the opportunity to obtain their industry-required RN-to-BSN pathway locally to advance their careers. These individuals in turn have opportunities to earn higher salaries and management positions at our local employers of Bachelor’s-prepared RNs.

St. Charles has made it clear that Central Oregon needs a local program to provide the RN-to-BSN program, so we are very much in support of this bill. When our local Associate-prepared RN graduates leave their rural home towns in Crook, Jefferson, or Deschutes to earn their BSN at a school elsewhere, these students often don’t return to our rural areas where we so desperately need them. We need to train these students here so we can employ them here .

Our community knows and trusts COCC and we have a proven track record; over the past five years, our COCC Nursing graduates have a 93.9% first time pass rate on the NCLEX exam while the national average is 84% over that same time period.

Our COCC ADN-Nursing program is already nationally accredited by ACEN and approved by the Oregon State Board of Nursing and would be well positioned to also offer the RN-to-BSN program. And since the RN-to-BSN program does not require acute care clinical placements, we would not be burdening our local hospital with having to find additional clinical spots for these students. Student clinical rotations would continue to occur in the two years leading up to the RN-to-BSN program.

In summary, COCC’s role is to meet the needs of the health care industry in the counties that we serve. SB 523 is necessary for us to continue to serve this mission. Please support rural areas such as those in Central Oregon in offering our own RN-to-BSN program by supporting SB 523.

Sincerely,

Julie Downing

Julie Downing, PhD, FACS, Instructional Dean (she, her, hers)
(Allied Health, Disability Services, Nursing, & Public Service Education)
Central Oregon Community College
2600 NW College Way (Metolius 203), Bend, OR 97703
(541) 383-7238, jdowning@cocc.edu