



CENTRAL OREGON
community college

2600 NW College Way
Bend, Oregon 97701
Telephone 541.383.7700
www.cocc.edu

February 28, 2023

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I write in support of SB 523.

Central Oregon is one of the areas of the state experiencing a severe nursing shortage. Central Oregon Community College (COCC) graduates 56 RNs every year, yet this number is not enough to keep up with the needs in our community. For those students who choose to move on to a BSN, they must leave the region to pursue those degrees, which brings with it a high likelihood that these students will leave permanently and not return to this area where our need is so great. If our RNs could continue their education locally with an RN-to-BSN program, we would be able to keep staffing levels higher and serve our region more effectively.

Often the students who do not or cannot leave the region would like to advance in their careers but because they need to care for families, they are not able to go away to school. More often than not, these students come from populations who have historically not had access to advanced degrees. To add a BSN degree at community colleges, especially rural colleges, would be an important stride toward increasing equitable access to health care training and create greater equity for Latinx, Black, and Native populations in particular.

Community colleges offer nursing degrees at affordable rates. At COCC, we enjoy a strong partnership with St. Charles Health Systems, who would benefit greatly from the presence of more locally employable BSNs.

Thank you for carefully considering this bill. To reiterate, I support SB 523 and believe it could positively transform the landscape of health care throughout Oregon.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Annemarie E. Hamlin".

Annemarie E. Hamlin
Vice President of Academic Affairs