

Dear Chair and Members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health & Health Care,

Thank you for your work on the behalf of Oregonians and for reviewing this important bill, SB703. My name is Lisa Fragala and I am a member of the Lane Community College (LCC) Board of Education. Community Colleges are routinely engaged in supporting healthcare workforce development. I was excited to learn that SB703 was approved by the State Senate with twenty-four members in support of reducing barriers for linguistically diverse CNA licensure candidates. SB703 is an opportunity to improve access to the CNA profession at a time when Oregon has a significant need for healthcare professionals at all levels and to help build a linguistically diverse healthcare workforce.

The current examination process in Oregon for CNA licensure is inequitable and biased against linguistically diverse candidates who are from the non-dominant language group. SB703 will help to change that. Research indicates that high stakes tests are biased against BIPOC and multicultural candidates. This bias is magnified when someone is required to take an exam in their non-dominant language. I've personally talked with smart, competent students in LCC's CNA program and heard the stories about the challenges they face.

SB703 will not result in a less prepared healthcare workforce. Candidates who are approved to take the state board exam have already successfully completed the clinical component of their training in a highly supervised manner with OSBN-approved instructors. Speaking multiple languages is an asset not a deficit. We need to remove inequitable barriers in the CNA certification process by passing SB703.

Oregon needs a diverse and strong healthcare workforce. Increasing exam accessibility to more diverse candidates will help improve CNA care in Oregon and is fully in line with the stated diversity, equity and access goals of the Oregon Health Authority (OHA). OHA has made a commitment to improving access to healthcare for more diverse groups. It also recognizes that to do this successfully Oregon needs to have healthcare workers who are linguistically and culturally diverse. In Lane County I've heard from local nursing faculty and healthcare industry leaders that they support SB 703 as an important solution for working towards this goal.

SB703 provides the opportunity for the State of Oregon to increase healthcare access for all Oregonians, to improve patient care by reducing shortages in CNA staffing, and to diversify the CNA workforce. I strongly urge you to support SB703 and move it forward to the Oregon House for passage.

Sincerely,

Lisa Fragala

LCC Board of Education member