



Oregon Center for
N U R S I N G

Testimony for the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

Regarding HB 4011

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The Oregon Center for Nursing (OCN) is a nonprofit workforce center working to advance the nursing profession across Oregon. The organization fulfills its mission of supporting “informed, well-prepared, diverse, and exceptional nursing professionals.” Established by nursing leaders in 2002, OCN was recognized in 2007 by SB 4 as an advisor to state agencies, and to develop comprehensive solutions to healthcare workforce shortages, a charge that we have successfully pursued through research, education, programming, and community partnerships. We are the only organization in the state that speaks to all aspects of nursing from education to retirement, and in all venues where nurses work.

More than two decades of research conducted by OCN and others has demonstrated how shortages in nurse faculty have created a choke point in the nursing pipeline, and severely limited the number of new nursing students existing programs can accept. Oregon-based nursing programs can only accept about 30 percent of qualified applicants. That means people only have about a one-in-three (30%) chance of being accepted into nursing school no matter their qualifications. The constraint on increasing class sizes and allowing more qualified people to attend nursing programs in Oregon is twofold: lack of clinical experiences and lack of nurse faculty.

The legislature made a wise investment during the last session in HB 3396, which allocated funds to pursue solutions for both increasing clinical experiences, and granted \$5 million to OCN to pursue evidence-based solutions to supporting nurse faculty.

OCN is committed to making sure all interventions are based on evidence to support the nurse faculty workforce now and in the future. Our research from 2017 shows three reasons for nurse faculty leaving their jobs: 1) lower pay than what is offered to nurses in clinical practice with the same education, 2) untenable workloads, and 3) negative or difficult work environments. OCN's

research shows it is almost never just one of these reasons, but often a combination that makes it difficult to retain and recruit nurse faculty.

With the state allocation, OCN has designed a three-part program to help support nurse faculty in Oregon, which will include:

- Immediate grants to individual publicly funded nursing programs to support retaining and recruiting nurse faculty
- Focus groups interviews to help inform localized solutions; and
- Investment in implementing identified localized solutions.

HB 3396 identified the funding to OCN be facilitated by the Oregon Health Authority, and OCN has been working through the OHA channels to execute a contract. No specific date has been set for when the contract will be approved.

The language of HB 3396 specifically called out publicly funded nursing programs. The impact is limited to 16 community college programs, and OHSU, the only publicly funded undergraduate nursing program in the state. Oregon relies on privately-funded, independent nursing programs to fill our vacancy gaps.

As of 2022, 970 nurse faculty (including tenure and adjunct) work as nurse faculty in the state of Oregon. Focusing on publicly funded nursing programs will impact Oregon's associate degree nursing program educators, but limit the impact on faculty of undergraduate nursing programs. Approximately 27 percent of our bachelor program faculty population works in a publicly funded institution, while 73 percent work in private. A more balanced allocation of resources, considering both public and private programs, might better address the overall needs and trends within nursing education.

While the focus of HB 3396 on publicly funded programs has the potential to yield substantial improvements in retaining nurse faculty and stabilizing nurse education programs, it narrows the scope of impact. The current bill, HB 4011, would expand the scope and be inclusive of all nursing programs. This expansion would require additional investment to allow OCN to extend our reach and ensure both public and private nursing programs receive the support they need.

The approach of HB 4011 would not only support the needs of nurse faculty from publicly funded programs, but would ultimately facilitate the development of nursing education across Oregon, ultimately strengthening the state's healthcare system.