



## SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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#### **It takes more instructors to resolve the nurse shortage**

*SB 754 creates incentive for nurses to join faculty, train next generation*

SALEM – A severe nursing shortage is reaching crisis levels in rural Oregon. There’s no shortage of interested aspiring nurses, as hundreds have lined up to enter nursing schools across the state. The primary roadblock to supplying the demand for nurses is a lack of faculty to each those students.

One main reason for the faculty shortage is a significant wage cut that nurses qualified to teach in community colleges – holding master’s or doctoral degrees – must absorb to become instructors. In many cases that pay cut can range between \$10,000 and \$30,000 a year or more.

[Senate Bill 754](#) is designed to help attract qualified nurses to teaching positions by creating a \$10,000 tax credit to instructors employed as nurse faculty members at approved nursing education programs in rural areas. This is expected to encourage qualified nurses to take positions training the profession’s next generation, allowing more opportunities to overcome the existing nurse shortage. The bill passed out of the Senate Committee on Health Care today.

“We have had a shortage of nurses for a long time in our community,” said Sen. Arnie Roblan, D-Coos Bay, who is co-sponsoring the bill. “Whatever we can do to help qualified people see an opportunity for themselves to teach courses at a community college that will help expand our health care workforce, we should be doing.”

Oregon is struggling to keep up with demand for health care professionals to provide services to an aging population. It’s not going to get any easier, as more working nurses retire every

year. The problem is particularly severe in rural Oregon. Aspiring nurses cannot be admitted into community college nursing programs in many cases because class sizes are limited. More nursing faculty would open up more opportunities for students to reach their dreams.

“This is a critical issue for rural communities,” said Rep. Caddy McKeown, D-Coos Bay, the bill’s other co-sponsor. “Recruitment and retention of health care professionals of many stripes in rural communities is very difficult. As we work toward making sure our aging population is cared for by our existing cadre of nursing professionals, there is a dearth. Our need is especially deep down on the South Coast.”

Rural communities in the bill are defined as geographic areas located at least 10 miles from any community with populations of 40,000 or more. The problem stretches across the rest of rural Oregon.

“It is difficult to fill vacant nursing faculty positions; keeping nursing faculty can be a challenge; and workloads are typically heavier in nursing education versus nursing positions outside academia,” said Laurie Post, Nursing Program and Instructor at Blue Mountain Community College in Pendleton. “When vacant nurse educator positions are advertised, there are very few, if any, applications from qualified master’s prepared nurses.”

The existing Rural Practitioner Tax Credit – created by the Legislature in 1989 – already provides incentives for a broad array of health care professionals who work in rural areas. Senate Bill 754 provides a similar incentive to entice practicing nurses to go into teaching to train the next generation of nurses.

“We hear how many students are interested in nursing, but the local community colleges lack the space,” Southwestern Oregon Workforce Investment Board Deputy Director Kyle Stevens said. “We have a choke point right now. There’s just a limit of capacity. All three of our community college in the region we serve have the facilities to expand, but they need the faculty.”

Senate Bill 754 now goes to the Joint Committee on Tax Expenditures for consideration.

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