House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce
Written Testimony on HB 2540
March 2017

Greetings Chair Reardon, Vice Chairs Alonso Leon and Whisnant, and Members of the Committee,

Good afternoon, and thank you for your time today.

It is a pleasure to submit written testimony today on behalf of Oregon's public universities on House Bill 2540. For the record, this testimony is submitted on behalf of the Oregon Council of Presidents— OCOP—a council designed to support statewide focus and partnership among Oregon's public universities and foster coordination and collaboration among the public university presidents and other university officials in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts and effectively share resources, best practices, and advocacy.

HB 2540 seeks to eliminate the prohibition on community colleges becoming baccalaureate degree-granting institutions, and specifically would allow community colleges to award bachelor's degrees in Nursing.

Currently OHSU offers bachelor's degree Nursing programs (BSN) at their main campus in Portland, and on four university campuses, at EOU, OIT, SOU and WOU. All public universities in the state with BSN programs utilize the nationally-recognized Oregon Consortium for Nursing Education (OCNE) curriculum, that supports transferability between 11 community colleges in Oregon and OHSU's BSN programs on four of our campuses. This partnership model has worked very well to date: our medical education university, OHSU, partners with Oregon's rural universities to offer BSN programs to increase access in rural communities. It is the most efficient way to deliver these programs and continue to provide maximum transfer options for students who start their Nursing education at a community college, and transfer to a university-level program.

We understand that Chemeketa Community College has chosen not to adopt the OCNE curriculum for transferability, and to maintain its own specialized curriculum. However, this could limit transfer options for their students to the publicly-supported BSN programs at OHSU, and limit program expansion in partnership with OHSU.

In contrast, Chemeketa has adopted a community college-university partnership model for Dental Hygiene with Oregon Tech that has worked exceptionally well. Oregon Tech employs its university faculty that are located at Chemeketa's campus to provide the bachelor's portion of the program at Chemeketa, under Oregon Tech's accreditation and authority. Again, this partnership model is supported by all seven universities and is accessible to Chemeketa, without duplication of effort, and without unbundling the OCNE model that is nationally acclaimed for transferability.

While HB 2540 adds provisions that are specific to Nursing, it opens the door to an expansion of the community college mission and in our view, a much less efficient use of limited educational resources. This bill goes beyond Nursing and is a fundamental shift that could have negative impacts on existing partnerships and especially on the Technical and Regional Universities that offer 10 existing Applied Baccalaureate programs, and are willing to offer more if there is market demand.

Given the state's scarce resources, we encourage the legislature to continue to support programs like OCNE that provide opportunities for community colleges through partnership with Oregon's universities, to offer their students in communities across the state the opportunity to receive their bachelors degree without duplicating resources. Oregon's public universities have offered to develop college-university partnerships to meet gaps in rural or regional workforce needs.   We fully support the partnership model and believe it is the way forward for Chemeketa and all of our community college partners.

We do not support HB 2540 as it would jeopardize the OCNE model and result in an unnecessary change in mission and degree-granting authority in Oregon.

Oregon's public universities support legislation that furthers community college-university partnerships.

Thank you.