



Oregon

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Board of Nursing

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Before the
Senate Committee on Health Care

SB 282 and -1 Amendments

The Oregon State Board of Nursing wishes to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 282 and the -1 amendments. The purpose of the bill is to prevent a person from using the title “nurse” unless she or he has earned a nursing degree from an accredited school of nursing and been licensed by the Board.

The bill would increase public safety by avoiding misrepresentation by unlicensed medical personnel who call themselves a “nurse.” Furthermore, it would give the Board clear authority to discipline those who inappropriately use the title as nurse imposters. The change would provide protection similar to what already exists in statute regarding use of the term “doctor.” The -1 amendments were suggested by Legislative Counsel to ensure that the Board will have statutory authority for enforcement purposes.

The term “nurse” has grown to be used very generically by a variety of personnel with varying levels of healthcare-related training, whether they are licensed by the Board of Nursing or not. Patients are not always aware of the title or qualifications of those who may provide their care. Any assistive personnel taking a temperature or blood pressure could be perceived to be a nurse by the patient, and little, if anything, is done to dispel that perception. As such, if such a person were to share casual medical anecdotes (for example) with a patient, the patient could view that as official medical advice offered by the “nurse.” This incorrect perception gives patients a false sense of security and could potentially lead to patient harm.

Currently, anyone may advertise their services as a ‘nurse’ to vulnerable clients, regardless of whether they have any professional nursing credentials or appropriate licensure. This poses an obvious risk to public safety. As long as they do not specifically refer to themselves as a Registered Nurse or a Licensed Practical Nurse (which are already protected titles), they are beyond the reach of corrective action by the Board.

The Board discussed the bill with the Oregon Nurses Association and received its support. We have also discussed the bill during open public Board meetings and received positive comments. There is no known opposition and we anticipate no fiscal impact as a result of this bill.

The Board would be glad to answer any questions the Committee may have. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 282 and the -1 amendments.