



Oregon

John A. Kitzhaber, MD, Governor

Board of Nursing

17938 SW Upper Boones Ferry Rd

Portland, OR 97224-7012

(971) 673-0685

Fax: (971) 673-0684

Oregon.BN.INFO@state.or.us

www.oregon.gov/OSBN

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Before the
Senate Committee on Health Care

SB 547

The Oregon State Board of Nursing wishes to submit testimony regarding Senate Bill 547. The purpose of the bill is to allow nurses who have retired from the workforce continue to practice as needed in a voluntary capacity.

Currently, nurses who allow their nursing licenses to expire at the end of their careers are not allowed to practice nursing, even in an unpaid volunteer capacity. If a nurse's license is in good standing (or was when it expired), the nurse can choose to apply for Retired Nurse status. This status allows licensees to use the term, "RN, Retired," or "LPN, Retired" after their signature, but does not allow them to practice as nurses. This has been a public safety necessity; nursing is such a technologically-driven and complex profession that nurses may not be able to maintain their competency after they leave the workforce.

Senate Bill 547 creates a Nurse Emeritus license that would allow Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, and Advanced Practice Registered Nurses to continue to use their knowledge and skills as volunteers after they've retired from the workforce. These volunteer positions often do not involve up-to-date technology requirements and are usually performed in service to their community. To overcome the problem of how to maintain a safe level of professional proficiency in retirement, SB 547 allows the Board of Nursing to create a method of determining competency specific to the Nurse Emeritus license type.

The Board has received numerous requests over the years from nurses who wish they could continue to practice in a limited capacity and serve their communities as volunteers during retirement. During the last five years, the Board has issued 744 Retired Nurse statuses. During the same time frame, 1,758 RNs and LPNs who were 65-years-old or older allowed their licenses to expire. If even ten percent of those nurses applied for the Nurse Emeritus status, there would be 175 nurses available to provide volunteer nursing care at health fairs, churches, or homeless shelters.

The Board does have one comment regarding the wording of the bill; we believe that on line 8, the reference to "certified registered nurse" was meant to read "clinical nurse specialist," since that is the only license type not included in the bill. There is no "certified registered nurse" license type currently in statute.

At this time, it's difficult to estimate the actual fiscal impact of this bill to the agency, although we anticipate it to be minimal. The Board would be glad to answer any questions the Committee may have. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding Senate Bill 547.