Testimony in Support of Adding Master of Nursing to the Skilled Workforce Student Loan Forgiveness Program SB 2221

Melissa A. Moser
414 13th Street NW
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House Human Services Committee

Representative Ruby, Chairman

Testimony in Support of SN 2221

Monday, March 17, 2025

Dear Chairman Ruby, Vice Chairman Frelich and the House Human Services Committee:

I am Melissa Moser, a resident of North Dakota and an Associate Professor at Lake Region State college. I am writing to request the inclusion of the Master of Nursing (MSN) degree in the Skilled Workforce Student Loan Forgiveness Program.

Nursing programs require instructors to hold a master's degree to ensure students receive high-quality education and training. This requirement is necessary for approval by the North Dakota Board of Nursing and other national nursing accrediting bodies. A master's degree provides nurse educators with the advanced knowledge and skills needed to teach complex nursing concepts and develop effective curricula. It also ensures they are up-to-date with the latest healthcare advancements, preparing students to meet the demands of the evolving healthcare environment. By maintaining high educational standards, nursing programs can produce competent graduates ready to provide excellent patient care and address the nursing shortage.

When I was hired in 2011 as a BSN, RN, I had to return to school to qualify for teaching at the college level. Since 2013, I have witnessed the critical need for qualified nurse educators firsthand. To effectively teach and support students in our nursing program, I completed my MSN in 2016. Unfortunately, I was not eligible for any loan forgiveness programs at that time, which placed a significant financial burden on my family and me.

Since then, I have pursued and completed a doctoral degree, entirely self-funded without any financial assistance from my employer or the state of North Dakota.

As a mentor for students in MSN programs specializing in nursing education, I have observed the financial struggles they face. Many of these students work full-time while pursuing their degrees, making them ineligible for traditional financial aid. This financial strain can be a significant barrier to completing their education and entering the field of nursing education. By including the Master of Nursing degree in the Skilled Workforce Student Loan Forgiveness Program, we can provide much-needed financial support to these dedicated individuals.

The shortage of nurse educators is a significant issue that impacts the entire healthcare system. According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), U.S. nursing schools turned away 65,766 qualified applicants in 2023 due to insufficient faculty, clinical sites, and other resources. The national nurse faculty vacancy rate is 7.8%, with most vacancies requiring or preferring a doctoral degree. Additionally, about one-third of the current nursing faculty workforce is expected to retire by 2025. This shortage limits the capacity of nursing programs and contributes to the broader nursing shortage.

By including the Master of Nursing degree in the Skilled Workforce Student Loan Forgiveness Program, we can encourage more nurses to pursue advanced degrees and careers in nursing education. This will help alleviate the faculty shortage and ensure that we can continue to educate and train the next generation of nurses.

Thank you for considering this important addition to the bill.

Sincerely,

Melissa Moser

Melissa Moser, DNP, RN, CNEcl