

STATE BOARD FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION

December 8, 2021

TOPIC: Legislative Update and Proposed Initiatives

PRESENTED BY: Fiona Lytle, Chief Communications Officer, Legislative Liaison; Moira Cullen, The Capstone Group; Jason Hopfer, JLH Public Affairs; and Mary Alice Mandarich

EXPLANATION:

Over the summer, the CCCS lobbying team met with all 13 college presidents, Chancellor Garcia, and CCCS executive staff to review fall Interim Committees, ballot initiatives, and consideration of several topics that could be raised by CCCS during the 2022 Colorado General Assembly.

Fiona and CCCS lobbyists will give the Board a brief summary of the following:

- activities occurring at the Capitol;
- work being done by Interim Committees,
 - with special focus on Colorado Youth Advisory Council Committee's [Bill B "Higher Education Support for Foster Youth"](#) approved by leg council on Nov. 15th, that mandates beginning AY-23 that IHEs must waive tuition costs, including mandatory fees, for foster youth;
- priorities of the Governor's proposed budget and what we are hearing for the December state budget forecast;
- bills and initiatives on the horizon that will affect higher education; and
- review CCCS's legislative initiative for the 2022 Session.

CCCS Legislative Initiative

The following topic has the highest priority for proposed legislative action at this time:

CCCS LPN-to-BSN Bridge Program

Background: Colorado is experiencing a critical nursing shortage that is expected to worsen considerably over the next several years. With an aging population and increasing demand on healthcare, nursing is projected to be one of the fastest growing, most in-demand careers through 2030. Employment of Registered Nurses (RN) in Colorado is projected to grow by 17 percent from 2021 to 2030, faster than the average for all occupations, with an average of 2,300 openings annually. Graduating skilled nurses is highly needed and increasing the number of innovative programs that produce quality nurses is essential.

CCCS is ideally positioned to significantly help close the state's nursing shortage. CCCS offers varying levels of nursing programs, including a certificate program for licensed practical nurses (LPN), an associate degree in nursing (RN) program, and a Bachelor's of Science in Nursing through a RN-to-BSN program.

Proposed Legislation: Through legislation, CCCS seeks to amend its role and mission statute to allow institutions that are part of the state system of community colleges to offer a LPN-to-BSN bridge program. The intent of the legislation is to allow an alternative pathway for students to earn a BSN.

Benefits:

- CCCS Colleges that offer the LPN program have institutional capacity to grow their program to offer a LPN-to-BSN bridge program without creating additional hurdles for students and without creating additional strain on industry for clinical sites. LPNs, who are already employed, are able to meet their clinical hours at their employment sites, which makes it easier for employers to retain LPN employees who wish to continue their education.
- The bridge program would help employers grow internal talent who are familiar with their workplace's culture and needs. Since practical nursing programs offered at the community colleges are diverse, this bridge program would facilitate the state's and employers' objectives to increase diversity in the nursing pool.
- The bridge program would allow students to earn a BSN at a faster pace than a traditional two-step (LPN-to-RN-to-BSN) program, saving them thousands in tuition and fees.
- Lastly, the LPN-to-BSN bridge program would increase student access to higher education, especially for students with pressing financial needs and obligations, thereby helping to decrease equity gaps.

RECOMMENDATION:

No action required.