



RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES
OF CALIFORNIA

March 8, 2024

The Honorable Mike Fong
Assembly Committee on Higher Education
1020 N Street, Room 173
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Assembly Bill 2104 (Soria) – SUPPORT
As Introduced February 5, 2024**

Dear Assembly Member Fong,

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), we support Assembly Bill 2104 (Soria). This measure would direct the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges to establish a pilot program to allow up to 15 community college districts to offer a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. RCRC is an association of forty rural California counties and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from each of those counties.

The shortage of health professionals in rural California has been a persistent concern for many years, and has become more acute in recent years due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the aging of the health care workforce. Rural areas with smaller populations that are farther from urban centers often have the lowest supply of health professionals per capita. Further, rural California does not have a high concentration of the four-year universities needed for graduate degree health professionals; however, often these communities have access to community college programs.

A recent [study](#) by the Healthforce Center at the University of California, San Francisco, which examines the healthcare workforce landscape in RCRC and the County Medical Services program (CMSP) counties, found that the Imperial Valley (Imperial), North Central region (Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Tehama), and the San Joaquin Valley (Kings, Madera, Merced, Tulare) sub-regions have the lowest ratios of RNs per capita in the state.

California's current healthcare workforce development apparatus is not equipped to handle the growing nursing needs of the state, especially in disadvantaged communities in rural parts of the state. While California's Community College system does offer associate degrees in nursing, the needs of the healthcare workforce more frequently demand a bachelor's degree. This level of degree is exclusive in California to

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ALPINE · AMADOR · BUTTE · CALAVERAS · COLUSA · DEL NORTE · EL DORADO · GLENN · HUMBOLDT · IMPERIAL · INYO · KINGS · LAKE · LASSEN
MADERA · MARIPOSA · MENDOCINO · MERCED · MODOC · MONO · MONTEREY · NAPA · NEVADA · PLACER · PLUMAS · SAN BENITO · SAN LUIS OBISPO
SANTA BARBARA · SHASTA · SIERRA · SISKIYOU · SOLANO · SONOMA · SUTTER · TEHAMA · TRINITY · TULARE · TUOLUMNE · YOLO · YUBA

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private institutions that are prohibitively expensive, or to the University of California and the California State University systems which have limited capacity and difficulty serving areas of the state with the highest need.

In order to meet our nursing workforce needs and extend these career opportunities to Californians throughout the state, we must expand the role of our community college system. AB 2104 will take the first step in this process by allowing a limited number of community college districts to expand their nursing programs to offer a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. This will expand the access and affordability of these degrees and will demonstrate how these offerings might be further expanded to additional community college districts.

For these reasons, RCRC is pleased to support AB 2104. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (916) 447-4806 or sdukett@rcrcnet.org.

Sincerely,



SARAH DUKETT
Policy Advocate

cc: The Honorable Esmeralda Soria, Member of the California State Assembly
Members of the Assembly Higher Education Committee
Jeanice Warden, Consultant, Assembly Higher Education Committee
Justin Boman, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus