



June 11, 2024

The Honorable Josh Newman
Chair, Senate Education Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 8220
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Assembly Bill 2104 (Soria) – SUPPORT
As Amended May 16, 2024**

Dear Chair Newman,

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), California State Association of Counties (CSAC), and Urban Counties of California (UCC), 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.

The shortage of health professionals in California, and particularly in rural areas of the state, 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. However, problems are not isolated to rural areas. The Inland Empire and the Central Valley are two of the fastest growing regions in California, and they are the two areas that have the lowest per capita health workforce. It's also a challenge to recruit and retain people in the Central Valley and Inland Empire that reflect the diversity and language capabilities of these regions.

A recent [study](#) by the Healthforce Center at the University of California, San Francisco, which examines the healthcare workforce landscape in rural 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. Statewide estimates show California faces a shortage of about 36,000 licensed nurses.

California's current healthcare workforce development apparatus is not equipped to handle the growing nursing needs of the state, especially in disadvantaged

The Honorable Josh Newman
Assembly Bill 2104 (Soria) – Support
June 11, 2024
Page 2

communities and 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 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, our organizations are pleased to support AB 2104, and respectfully request your “Aye” vote when this measure is heard before your committee. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,



Sarah Dukett
Policy Advocate
Rural County Representatives of California
sdukett@rcrcnet.org
916-447-4806



Kelly Brooks-Lindsey
Legislative Advocate
Urban Counties of California
kbl@hbeadvocacy.com
916-753-0844



Jolie Onodera
Senior Legislative Advocate
California State Association of Counties
jonodera@counties.org
916-591-5308

cc: The Honorable Esmeralda Soria, Member of the California State Assembly
Members of the Senate Education Committee
Lynn Lorber, Chief Consultant, Senate Education Committee
Amanda Richie, Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus