

Thank you for allowing me to speak to your committee today about an important issue for the state of Kansas. I am Shirley Ulrich, Chief Nursing Officer of Coffey County Hospital in Burlington Hospital. I am also a member of Kansas Committee of Nursing Education and Practice. This committee is representative of nursing practice and all levels of nursing education.

It is my privilege to testify on this bill that would require nursing licensure before practice. As the head of a nursing division of a small rural hospital, it is necessary for this bill to pass. Small rural hospitals cannot continue to absorb the costs for people that have graduated from nursing programs but fail to pass boards (called the NCLEX-RN). The costs include advertising, orientation, and nursing staff time that occur before the person takes boards for licensure. When the person fails boards, the costs of advertising, orientation and nursing staff time occurs again. The person who fails board is also now without a job. With economic constraints of a small rural hospital, we cannot have an extra person working and drawing a paycheck waiting to take the NCLEX-RN again.

The facts show:

- A delay in the graduate's ability to practice does not negatively impact the NCLEX-RN pass rates.
- Data was reviewed from eleven states who require license before practice as a professional nurse evidenced that eight had a mean pass rate above the national average.
- The time required to obtain NCLEX-RN test results has been reduced significantly from the time when the regulations were changed to allow 120 days.
- National and Kansas data verify that graduates who take the NCLEX-RN earlier rather than later have a better pass rate.
- Healthcare cost savings could be realized by hiring licensed nurses.

It is time for nursing in Kansas to be held to the same level of licensure as other professionals. Physicians and lawyers are required to pass the licensure exam before allowed to practice. In this time of marginal economics in health care in small rural hospitals, it is necessary to require licensure before nursing practice.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you about this important issue for Kansans. Kansans will be safer with this bill in effect.