Agenda Item 6.3

Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Establishing a Process to Address any Areas of Nursing Shortages identified by the Board's Nursing Workforce Forecast Pursuant to Business and Professions Code (BPC) Section 2717

BRN Board Meeting | February 15-16, 2023

AGENDA ITEM: 6.3
DATE: February 15-16, 2023

ACTION REQUESTED: Discussion and possible action regarding establishing a process to address any regional areas of nursing shortages identified by the Board's nursing workforce forecast pursuant to Business and Professions Code (BPC) section 2717

REQUESTED BY: Board Administrative Committee

BACKGROUND:

California State Auditor (CSA) Report 2019-120: Board of Registered Nursing: It Has Failed to Use Sufficient Information When Considering Enrollment Decisions for New and Existing Nursing Programs was released July 2020 by the California State Auditor.

Recommendation #11, one of four recommendations to the Legislature asked the Legislature to amend state law to do the following: require BRN to develop a plan to address regional areas of shortage identified by its nursing workforce forecast. This request was to better inform stakeholders and the governing board's decision making when considering enrollment decisions for new and existing nursing programs. Assembly Bill (AB) 1015-Rubio (Chapter 591, Statutes of 2021) was chaptered on October 6, 2021, and was effective January 1, 2022, as Business and Professions Code (BPC) 2717.

University of California San Francisco (UCSF) is the Board's contracted vendor that conducts the nursing workforce forecast report which is produced every two years. On the Board's website located under Reports are Forecasts of the Regional Nurse Workforce in California dating back to 2007.

The most recent published survey was published August 2022. Below are sections and references taken from this report:

Overview: The August 2022 report used data from two surveys conducted in California and other data sources to assess the current and future supply and demand of Registered Nurses (RNs). We find that RN employment rates have remained steady over the past four years, but many older RNs have left nursing. In addition, a large proportion of older RNs intends to retire or quit within the next two years. Many RNs report that childcare and school closures have made it difficult to work during the pandemic and also report that they feel unsupported by their employers. The supply and demand projections estimate that a shortage of RNs now exists but will diminish as RN education enrollments return to and surpass pre-pandemic levels.

Results: The preliminary data from the 2022 Survey of Registered Nurses indicate that RN employment has remained stable over the past four years but that many older RNs have left nursing. In addition, a large proportion of older RNs intends to retire or quit within the next two years. Many RNs reported that childcare and school closures have made it difficult to work, and that the feel that their employers do not care about their well-being or recognize their contributions. There have been decreases in new enrollments and graduations from RN education programs over the past two years, although numbers of

applications continue to rise. Together, these changes have led to a reduction in the supply of RNs compared with previous projections. A shortage of RNs is estimated to exist in 2022. RN education enrollments are projected to surpass pre-pandemic levels within the next two years, which will lead to a closing of the shortage by 2029.

Registered Nursing Education: California's nursing schools provided information about their enrollments and graduations for the 2020-21 academic year in a survey that was fielded in fall 2021. (Note that one private bachelor's degree program did not report data; the prior year's enrollments were used as an estimate for the 2020-21 year.) During the pandemic, many schools have been impacted by the loss of access to clinical sites and shifted instruction to online modalities to reduce virus transmission. Six education programs indicated that they skipped an admissions cohort in the 2019-20 academic year due to the pandemic… there was a decrease in enrollment spaces available between 2018-19 and 2020-21, with a loss of 529 spaces (-3.6%). There was an even larger decrease in total new enrollments, with a decline of 1,146 students (-7.6%). The 2019-20 and 2020-21 academic years were the first in more than a decade in which there were fewer new enrollments than spaces available. The decreases in enrollments were almost entirely in associate degree programs and public colleges/universities.

Projections of Future Supply and Demand for RNs: The future supply and demand for RNs were projected using the RN Survey and Schools Survey data …, the best projection of future RN supply is slightly lower than was projected in 2019, with 391,067 projected FTE RN supply in 2037. The age- and vacancy-adjusted demand projections estimate that there will be a need for 361,727 FTE RNs in that year…, the supply of RNs by the end of 2022 is estimated to be below demand by 18,952 full-time equivalent employment, which is a 6.2 percent gap. A shortage of RNs is projected to persist until 2029, when supply and demand become balanced. The projected supply also exceeds the 2030 demand projection from the Employment Development Department. By 2037, there is projected to be greater supply of RNs than demand, with an 8.1 percent surplus (29,330 RNs). Note that some RNs were not working in nursing but seeking employment in 2022, ... We estimate that approximately 7,862 RNs were seeking employment, which would fill about 41 percent of the current shortfall.

Discussion regarding several limitations: First these are statewide analyses and projection, which do not reveal [important regional differences](#) that have been previously reported. Second, the projections include assumptions about retirement patterns and other departures from RN work that may not hold true in the long-term. Third, the projections assume that most newly-graduated RNs obtain licenses and become available to work in California. However, if newly-graduated RNs have difficulty passing the national licensing examination, supply will be attenuated; national data indicate that exam pass rates have declined during the pandemic. In addition, if newly-graduated RNs are not hired by California's health care organizations, they may move to other states and thus not become part of California's RN supply.

Shortages of RNs, even if short-lived, have significant consequences for patients and for our healthcare system. Low RN staffing levels are associated with greater risk of hospital-acquired infections, readmissions, and death. Shortages of RNs also have financial repercussions as employers have to pay more for traveling nurses to fill staffing gaps and increase wages to attract permanent employees. A number of policy strategies have been recommended to alleviate the challenges faced by the RN workforce, which include policies and programs to increase the numbers of nurses entering the workforce and to ensure high-quality, safe, and supportive work environments to increase RN retention. In addition, healthcare organizations can implement a variety of evidence-based approaches to mitigate burnout among their workforce, including improving communication, establishing

wellness initiatives, offering individual counseling and group counseling, providing services such as childcare and transportation assistance, offering flexibility in the workplace, ensuring adequate protective equipment and supplies, and developing peer support programs.

Additionally, AB 2684 Nursing (2021-2022), the Board's sunrise bill, addressed some issues of workforce. BPC 2785.6 was added which codified the Nursing Education and Workforce Advisory Committee in statue and requires this advisory committee to solicit input from approved nursing programs and members of the nursing and health care professions to study and recommend nursing standards and solutions to workforce issues to the board. Furthermore, BPC 2786.2(b)(1)(F)(v) was added to state that the board shall not consider nursing workforce issues, including those identified under Section 2717, as factors for purposed of considering nursing program enrollment increase requests.

The update to BPC 2786.2 directly conflicts with the CSA Recommendation #2 to the Board, "To better ensure that California has an appropriate number of nurses in the future, BRN should do the following by January 1, 2021: ensure that the governing board's enrollment decisions and other actions adequately take into consideration the regional analyses in BRN's future workforce forecasts. Specifically, it should amend its policies to require that when its staff present information to the education committee and the governing board to inform them on pending enrollment decisions, staff should include relevant information related to BRN's most recent forecast of the nursing workforce."

Since 2019, the Board has reviewed and approved 73 different enrollment increase requests that includes new program approvals and new campus locations, increasing the nursing student available enrollment numbers by 3,708.

Year	Board Action	Number of Actions in the Year	Number of New Students in PRIVATE School Setting	Number of New Students in PUBLIC School Setting	Total Number of New Students	Number of Feasibilities Accepted	Number of Tentative Students
2018	New Programs Approved	2	142	0	142	0	0
	New Campus Locations	0	0	0	0		
	Enrollment Increases	6*	2	44	46		
	TOTAL	**8**	**144**	**44**	**188**		
	Percentage of New Students		77%	23%			
2019	New Programs Approved	3	192	0	192	5	348
	New Campus Locations	5	412	10	422		
	Enrollment Increases	5	138	50	188		
	TOTAL	**13**	**742**	**60**	**802**		
	Percentage of New Students		93%	7%			
2020	New Programs Approved	1	60	0	60	1	120
	New Campus Locations	1	120	0	120		
	Enrollment Increases	2	84	18	102		
	TOTAL	**4**	**264**	**18**	**282**		
	Percentage of New Students		94%	6%			
2021	New Programs Approved	5	458	0	458	5	264
	New Campus Locations	4	580	0	580		
	Enrollment Increases	14	315	106	421		
	TOTAL	**23**	**1353**	**56**	**1459**		
	Percentage of New Students		93%	4%			
2022	New Programs Approved	3	180	20	200	0	0
	New Campus Locations	3	447	40	487		
	Enrollment Increases	9	363	147	510		
	TOTAL	**15**	**990**	**207**	**1197**		
	Percentage of New Students		83%	17%			

NEXT STEP:

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