Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Board of Registration in Nursing

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Board members and colleagues-thank you for the opportunity to speak today regarding the proposed regulations to 244 CMR 6.00. Specifically, I would like to address 6.04 2 (b) 4c (iii)-faculty qualifications-faculty appointed to a Registered Nursing program, teaching the clinical or skills lab component of a nursing course.

The requirement an earned baccalaureate degree in nursing and also meet at least one of the following:

(iii) possess a minimum of five years full-time Registered Nurse experience within the last eight years and a) have been appointed before [effective date of regulation]; and (b) be mentored by faculty who possesses a graduate degree in nursing.

The elimination of the former waiver option 3 allowing for baccalaureate prepared nurses to teach exclusively in clinical and lab settings unless employed prior to the effective date of the regulation will impact nursing programs tremendously in the Commonwealth. As a nursing leader in academia for 30 years across programs from associate to clinical doctorate, I whole heartedly support advanced degrees for nursing faculty. However, in the current environment as a nurse administrator including an associate degree nursing program, I know the challenge of hiring and retaining masters prepared nurses for our clinical adjunct positions. The MA BORN has been monitoring nursing faculty issues, specifically faculty retention for several years indicating their concern for the faculty shortage.

Data collected clearly indicates the serious challenge nursing programs are facing in the near future with a vast nursing faculty shortage. In 2014, a white paper was published on the Nursing Faculty Workforce Challenges in Massachusetts by members of the Massachusetts Action Coalition.1 In 2015, a research study2 was conducted with the Academic Progression in Nursing (APIN) grant as part of the Mass Action Coalition, and published in 2017. 3,4 The study surveyed nursing faculty across Massachusetts regarding their workload, satisfaction and intent to leave nursing/retire. We saw that nursing faculty who responded were older, 67% were over 50 years of age and 32% of respondents were 60 years or older; only 13% were under 40 years of age. The mean age of nursing faculty in MA was 55 years old at that time with AACN reporting 53 years as the mean age nationally (2016). At that time, 32% of the respondents reported they were likely to leave their job in 5 years and additional 41% to leave their job in 10 years. 52% overall of the respondents indicated retirement as their reason for leaving their current position. The study concludes: “There is indication that faculty are entering the profession later in life, ensuring a shorter work life in academia along with an increased workload. Thus, filling faculty positions in the future will become even

more difficult.”3

Fast forward to 2020, AACN identifies the average of nursing faculty is now 55.5 years and has reported 5 that faculty shortages in nursing programs nationally are limiting student capacity at a time when the need for professional registered nurses continues to grow. Budget constraints, an aging faculty, and increasing job competition from clinical sites have contributed to this crisis. In addition, nurses seeking advanced degrees are being turned away in alarming numbers –over 80,000 in 2019-2020-due to insufficient numbers of faculty, clinical sites, preceptors and budget constraints.5

Currently in Massachusetts, as a snapshot in time, there are 75 nursing faculty positions posted on higheredjobs.com and 210 positions listed on indeed.com for the Boston area at a time when there are not traditionally positions hired such as in the spring.

The overarching concern with limiting MA nursing programs from hiring qualified BSN prepared clinical nurses is the impact on enrollment in these programs. Already challenged by shrinking number of clinical sites in non-COVID times, this restriction will further burden the programs overwhelming so in the ASN level programs, where their MSN prepared faculty are teaching in the classroom.

Other states such as Maryland are funding efforts to address the shortage of nurse educators by funding schools of nursing to increase educational capacity.

The MA BORN has the opportunity here to support programs by amending this proposed change by eliminating the hiring date requirement or with a stipulation for enrollment in an MSN within 1-2 years of hire rather than prohibiting employment. Thank you for your time.

1. Manning, K., Bittner, N. Seymour-Route, P. & Bechtel, C. (2014) *Nursing Faculty Workforce Challenges in Massachusetts*. Massachusetts Action Coalition White Paper, December 2014.

2. Bittner, N., Bechtel, C. Frontiero, L., Kowal, N., & Silveira, C. (2015) *Nursing Faculty Workload Survey 2015: Summary Report*. Robert Wood Johnson APIN Grant; Massachusetts Action Coalition, December 2015.

3. Bittner, N & Bechtel, C (2017). *Identifying and Describing Faculty Workload Issues: A Looming Faculty Shortage.* Nursing Education Perspectives. [July/August 2017 - Volume 38 - Issue 4 - p 171–176](http://journals.lww.com/neponline/pages/currenttoc.aspx)

4. Bittner, N. (2016) *Highlights of the Massachusetts Nursing Faculty Workload Survey.* Massachusetts Report on Nursing (14) 2, 12.

5. AACN Nursing Faculty Shortage Fact Sheet. Sept, 2020