



**To:** House Higher Education Budget Committee

**From:** Monica Natzke  
Chief Nursing Officer  
AdventHealth South Overland Park

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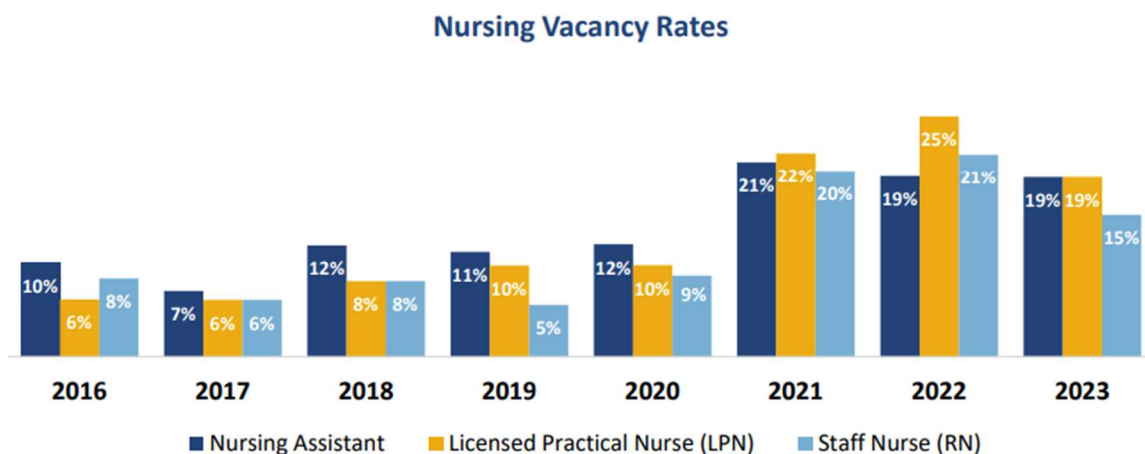
**Re:** House Bill 2248

As the Chief Nursing Officer of **AdventHealth South Overland Park**, I appreciate the opportunity to provide comments in support of **House Bill 2248**.

The **Kansas Nursing Initiative Grant Program** was developed in 2006 to address a growing nursing shortage in the state by providing needed resources to nursing education programs. The program allows nursing programs to seek funds for needed equipment, faculty development, and technologies to keep their programs operating.

The vacancy rate of Registered Nurses in Kansas was 15% in 2023 and was 19% for Licensed Practical Nurses. This is drastically higher than “normal” years before the pandemic when RN and LPN vacancy rates were 5% and 10% respectively, according to the 2024 Kansas Health Care Workforce Report. It is crucial that our schools of nursing throughout Kansas are well equipped to meet the needs of students today to enroll, retain, and graduate as many well-trained nurses as possible.

#### Nursing Vacancy Rates (2023)



As the past chair of the Kansas Hospital Association Workforce Committee, we've heard directly about needs for nursing programs continuing to keep pace with industry needs to attract students and to retain educators in these critically needed programs.

House Bill 2248 will update the criteria and usages for laboratory supplies by increasing the threshold that colleges can request to receive grant dollars for non-consumable supplies and equipment from \$30,000 to \$100,000. This is necessary as the cost of all equipment and supplies has since increased significantly.

As a hospital Chief Nursing Officer, our simulation labs are over \$4 million dollars conservatively. Victoria birthing simulators can cost around \$90,000 per simulator. Pediatric simulators or high-fidelity babies can be \$65,000 per baby. We want our students to be well trained with equipment that is not outdated so our nursing programs do not struggle to attract students.

HB 2248 also updates the criteria and usages for faculty development and support. We continue to hear that higher education institutions struggle to keep nursing educators who can make so much more nursing at the bedside. This will include the ability of nursing programs to pay for adjunct clinical instructors, particularly in scenarios where the local hospital may have qualified nurse educators available to spend a day a week supporting students.

Student support is a very important component of House Bill 2248. This will allow for this funding to also be sought for things like general tutoring and study support for all classes involved in the nursing program beyond just support for the NCLEX prep. This flexibility would also allow a nursing student to be able to seek a grant or stipend for things like childcare – removing a critical barrier that causes many students to withdraw from their nursing program before graduating.

We appreciate that House Bill 2248 will allow for portions of these funds to be received by nursing programs through multi-year commitments, making the investments more cohesive and better able to serve the needs of students and faculty today but also into the future.

While this bill doesn't seek a funding investment, we want to note that Kansas is lagging in large scale investments to attract and retain nurses.

Nurses are one of the highest volume of job openings that will be in demand for the next 10 years, with an estimated 3,200 new registered nurse jobs to be created by 2030.<sup>1</sup> Nursing education programs report a 39% decrease in enrollment over the last 10 years and with an anticipated increase in nursing shortages in the future, as 29% of Kansas RN's and 23% of LPN's are planning to retire within the next five years, we must make investments now.<sup>2</sup>

We believe that House Bill 2248 makes steps in the right direction, and we urge this committee to advocate for additional funds for the Kansas Nursing Initiative Grant Program.

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<sup>1</sup> KHA Workforce Report, 2024. <https://www.kha-net.org/DataProductsandServices/DataPublic/d165169.aspx?type=view>

<sup>2</sup> State of Nursing in Kansas, 2024, <https://www.kumc.edu/documents/son/nursing-work-force/Nursing-in-KS-Workforce-Report.pdf>