

**Testimony in Support of the Continued Eligibility of Excelsior College Associate Degree in Nursing Graduates for RN Licensure in Texas**

by

**James N. Baldwin, JD, EdD, President of Excelsior College**

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Good morning. I am Dr. James Baldwin, President of Excelsior College. I appreciate the opportunity to address the Commission on behalf of our students, graduates, and faculty. And I am grateful for the hospitality legislators and staff members have shown us over these recent months.

I am here in support of our Associate Degree in Nursing program to ensure the continued eligibility of our graduates for Registered Nurse licensure in the state of Texas.

Dr. Pollard has presented the significant steps the College has taken to demonstrate our commitment to program quality and the capacity of our graduates to fulfill their responsibilities to patient health and wellness.

As a nonprofit institution, our core values – accessibility, affordability, and academic integrity – guide us in our mission of helping adults earn college degrees.

For nearly 50 years the College has served this essential public purpose through a nontraditional and flexible model, recognizing college credits earned at accredited institutions and assessing prior learning gained outside the classroom. Twelve years ago we introduced direct instruction to tens of thousands of students, including those on military bases and installations abroad and at home – many right here in Texas.

Admittedly, and expectedly, some of our innovations have disrupted traditional approaches – and encountered opposition by those bound to long-held ways of educating students. But the need for accessible, affordable, and scalable higher education compels us to implement programs that leverage decades of progress in technology and prior learning and experience.

In total, more than 14, 000 Texans have graduated from Excelsior College. Of those, 5,000 are graduates of our associate degree in nursing program. And, as you have heard, many are helping to address the severe nursing shortage here in Texas - at no cost to your taxpayers.

Excelsior has worked with the Texas Board of Nursing, the legislature and governor's office over many years. We understand and support the need for reasonable and

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necessary oversight of educational and professional licensing programs. We have used our experience here in Texas and throughout the country to continuously improve the quality of our program – focusing on academic integrity and necessary preparation and clinical experience for entry into the nursing profession.

The merits of our program, our commitment to continuous improvement, our mission to serve adult learners and our advocacy on behalf of our graduates and future students here in Texas are clearly demonstrated.

As you deliberate the future of the Board of Nursing, our Texas graduates, and all adults who require innovative approaches to higher education and professional certification, we respectfully request that you continue to allow our graduates to remain eligible for professional licensure in Texas.

Thank you.