

**Testimony in Support of the Continued Eligibility of Excelsior College
Associate Degree in Nursing Graduates for RN Licensure in Texas**
by
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Good morning (or afternoon). I am Dr. Mary Lee Pollard, Dean of the Excelsior College School of Nursing. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Today I am here to ensure the continued eligibility of our associate degree graduates for Registered Nurse licensure in the state of Texas.

Excelsior has a 45-year history in Texas of providing a nursing education for students who otherwise would not be able to become RNs. We provide a unique competency-based curriculum specifically designed for Licensed Vocational Nurses, Paramedics, and specific classifications of Military Service Members.

Our school of nursing is a quality program. We have been designated a Center of Excellence for Nursing Education by the National League of Nursing four times and received the Best School award from the American Assembly for Men in Nursing five times. We have held specialty nursing accreditation since our inception and are approved by the New York State Board of Nursing and the New York State Education Department.

The School of Nursing faculty and I share the Commission's concern regarding the recent decrease in our graduates' pass rate on the national licensing examination for registered nurses, known as the NCLEX. In recent years, the pass rate for Excelsior associate degree graduates has fallen below the Texas benchmark.

Even though current law does not require us to, we have taken the same action the Texas Board of Nursing requires of in-state programs. We conducted a thorough review of our available data and implemented a comprehensive action plan to address the decreased pass rate.

We made evidence based changes throughout our curriculum - adding additional admission criteria, increasing standards for academic progression and increasing academic rigor at all points within the curriculum. At Excelsior, we want to continue to graduate quality nurses, and help Texas meet its need for more nurses. The Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Studies reports Texas is currently experiencing a shortage of nearly 15,000 RNs and this shortage is expected to increase to 60,000 RNs by 2030.

Last year, 74 Texas nursing programs were unable to accept all their qualified applicants into their incoming freshmen class. Sixty-nine percent of those schools reported that the lack of clinical space was the reason; fifty-seven percent cited a lack of faculty as an additional reason they did not fill their incoming class.

The Excelsior model does not compete for clinical space or faculty with the in-state Texas nursing schools. We are not supported by Texas tax dollars and we are not competing for the traditional student population who enroll in brick and mortar Texas nursing programs. We are an alternative for those students who would otherwise never become RNs in Texas.

Approximately 4,400 Excelsior graduates are providing nursing care in Texas. Excelsior provided them with a pathway to a better life – something that would have remained out of reach if not for the nontraditional nature of our model.

Excelsior has a long and proud history of serving the state of Texas. We ask that you base your decision on the merits of our program and our mission. We ask that the graduates of our program who pass the licensure examination continue to be licensed and permitted to work as registered nurses in Texas.

Thank you.