



COLORADO
Gov. John Hickenlooper

March 23, 2018

The Honorable Colorado House of Representatives
General Assembly
State Capitol
200 E. Colfax Ave.
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Members of the Colorado House of Representatives:

Today, we filed with the Secretary of State House Bill 18-1086, “Concerning Allowing Community Colleges to Offer a Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing” (“HB 18-1086”). As I am neither signing nor vetoing HB 18-1086, the bill will become law at 12:01 A.M. on March 24, 2018. This letter sets forth my reasons for allowing HB 18-1086 to become law without my signature.

HB 18-1086 authorizes Colorado community colleges to offer a bachelor of science degree in nursing (“BSN”). The bill is crafted with the worthy goal to alleviate a documented shortage of nursing professionals. On this point, we take no issue. Furthermore, we believe a strong and coordinated statewide approach is necessary to effectively address this shortage. Far more must be done to thoroughly address this issue. Adequate nursing faculty are needed; clinical hours must be available; and a comprehensive conversation with education and healthcare providers, as well as the Board of Nursing and key stakeholders must occur. With the enactment of HB 18-1086, we direct the Commission on Higher Education (“CCHHE”) to convene the appropriate stakeholders to understand where the industry is moving and how best to align educational programs with those trends. Colorado should lead on addressing this matter, identifying solutions, and implementing action plans.

However, in not signing HB 18-1086, we raise two major flaws. First, granting authority to the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education (SBCCOE) rather than the CCHHE to determine BSN offerings is a highly questionable expansion of the role of Colorado’s community college system board. State law places strict boundaries around the role and mission of each college and college system in the State. This structure ensures a strong postsecondary system that meets students’ needs and ensures accessible, cost-effective programs. Current law limits the “role and mission” of the Colorado Community College System to “general, personal, career, and technical education programs.”¹ HB 18-1086 expands that mission to allow the SBCCOE to authorize a four-year BSN completion degree as well. While seemingly minor, this expansion of role and mission could lead to program duplication and inefficiencies in the higher education system.

¹ COLO. REV. STAT. § 23-60-201 (2018).



The bill's proponents contend that precedent for community colleges to offer advanced and four-year degree programs approved by the SBCCOE was already set when the General Assembly authorized Red Rocks Community College to provide a graduate program in physician assistant studies.² We find this argument unpersuasive. A second instance of questionable mission expansion is not made more reassuring by a first.

Second, we are troubled by the limited outreach by the bill's proponents in not involving all relevant stakeholders and higher education institutions in crafting this legislation prior to enlisting sponsors. All legislation benefits from broad and robust engagement. Such collaboration would certainly have benefited this bill - and might have alleviated or addressed the issue we raise above.

We remain hopeful that HB 18-1086 will help lessen the nursing shortage, and do not doubt the Board's intention to succeed at a high level. In future legislation, however, the General Assembly should not permit erosion of the important and necessary oversight of the CCHE, nor accept mission-creep by the SBCCOE, despite laudable goals that may conceal such expansions.

For these reasons, I allowed House Bill 18-1086 to become law without my signature.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John W. Hickenlooper". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

John W. Hickenlooper
Governor

² COLO. REV. STAT. §§ 23-60-211(3), 213 (2018).