

'Nursing is in great peril': Idaho Healthcare Institute hopes to combat health care staffing shortages

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Gov. Brad Little, third from left, joined community members and business leaders for the ribbon cutting for the Idaho Healthcare Institute.

Gov. Brad Little, business leaders and community members all gathered Thursday afternoon in Idaho Falls to celebrate the ribbon cutting for the Idaho Healthcare Institute.

The Idaho Healthcare Institute, located at 850 Energy Drive, is a unique nursing program that directly partners with the College of Eastern Idaho,

Mountain View Hospital and Idaho Falls Community Hospital to combat the state's shortage of health care professionals.

"This (the institute) exceeds my fantasy about what we were going to do about health care," Gov. Little said.

Little said he'd first thought about implementing a system like the Idaho Healthcare Institute beginning in 1984.

"We were just a little slow in getting it done," Little said with a laugh.

The institute provides three levels of certification — Certified Nursing Assistant, Licensed Practical Nurse and Registered Nurse.

According to a 2023 National Council of State Boards of Nursing study, more than 100,000 registered nurses left the medical field in the last two years. Without programs such as the institute's, a health care crisis would be on the rise.

"Nursing, at the moment, is in great peril," said James Adamson, Mountain View and Idaho Falls Community Hospital CEO.

"We have always had a health care shortage, but COVID put these problems on steroids," Little said.

When College of Eastern Idaho first used a humanlike robot for its nursing students years ago, the school's program was graduating 35 students a year, CEI president Rick Aman said.

Aman said that number has reached 225 graduates per year.

Little hopes that the institute's program will boost the number of nursing graduates to 500 per year.

The institute provides students with a short-tracked, financially achievable path to working in the health care field. CNAs can receive their certificate in as few as 10 weeks, an institute news release said.

Each of the three courses have scholarships available upon application.



“Right out of high school, I didn’t have any money at all,” LPN student Truman Langevin said in the release. “I think that without the scholarship, I wouldn’t have been able to go on to get my LPN or RN. It kick-started my career because it helped me stay focused, stay on track, worry less about money and more about how I get to a position where I can help people.”

All of the instructors are nurses themselves, bringing life experience into the classrooms. Students will work clinical rotations at Mountain View Hospital and Idaho Falls Community Hospital.

“We want to train students to a level where they can go to work immediately,” Aman said. “Don’t make us guess what you (the employers) want. Tell us.”

Aman said the partnership between local hospitals and nursing students through the institute does just that. It answers all the questions. Students will be uniquely equipped and trained for local hospital needs.

However, the institute isn’t looking to only fix health care shortages locally, but statewide.

“It’s a partnership. We hope to work with EIRMC, Bingham, Portneuf, Madison and more,” said Aman.

Little echoed the same sentiment. He emphasized that nursing shortages are especially rampant in the Gem State.

“Use this as the incubator, the example for the rest of the state,” Gov. Little said. “We need to scale this out into rural Idaho.”

The institute hopes to make it easier for nursing students to transition from the classroom into a hospital, with more experience and less financial burden.

“I’m very proud of you,” Gov. Little said. “ And you should be very proud of yourselves.”

Learn more about the institute at its idahohealthcareinstitute.com.