

Chair Prusak, Members of the Committee:

My name is Steven Garrett and I am a surgical technologist. I have worked in the operating room for 12 years.

When I started in the healthcare industry and was initially introduced to surgical smoke my assumption was that the smoke generated from surgery was completely harmless and not concerning to me. I was under the belief that I chose a profession to heal people, and if I were in danger, surely my colleagues and my employer would not put me in harm's way.

Unfortunately, I spent nearly 10 years working through excruciating headaches, scratchy dry eyes and a constant runny nose that I could at the time only contribute to allergies. Only until recently after much personal research did I discover that these symptoms were directly related to the side effects of surgical smoke.

Armed with this knowledge about the dangers of surgical smoke, I made the choice to advocate for my health and safety with my employer, expressing concern about working for a surgeon who refused to evacuate surgical smoke. As a result, the administration and management team decided the solution to the problem of surgical smoke was to remove me from this doctor's service and replace me with another surgical technician. From this experience, I learned that speaking out could be detrimental to my career and harmful to another colleague's health.

On many nights upon returning home from work my children have asked why I smell a certain way and as it turns out the noxious odor they are referring to is they burnt flesh of a human being that has penetrated my clothing, my skin and my hair.

So it is with extreme gratitude that you have allowed me to share my story with this committee and I beg you to take our request for surgical smoke legislation seriously to maintain my health and safety so that I may continue providing quality healthcare to my fellow Oregonians.

HB 2622 would ensure that harmful surgical smoke is evacuated from every operating room in Oregon and provide me the peace of mind that my health and safety are protected while I am at work. Thank you for considering this important legislation.