

March 23, 2021

Dear Chair Prusak, members of the House Health Committee,

I am writing you today to request your support for HB 2464, which would create a common-sense solution to the shortage of certified surgical technologists in Oregon.

My ASC is located in Southern Oregon, and serves up to 15,000 patients per year. Surgery Center of Southern Oregon is a multi-specialty center that provides high-quality low-cost healthcare alternatives for outpatient procedures.

The Surgery Center of Southern Oregon has been serving Southern Oregon and Northern California for 22 years and would benefit directly by having an apprenticeship program available for surgical technologists. In our organization 50% of the Surgical Technologists are within 3 years of retirement and each has more than 30 years' experience in the field. Throughout rural Oregon healthcare facilities there are dedicated, competent individuals with decades of experience just waiting to be tapped. The proximity of the precious few colleges that provide this training does not meet the needs of rural communities, and does not meet the demand for Surgical Technologists in general.

The apprenticeship program does more than train team members in their own community, it ensures that training continues and is not at risk, as is current state, by not having enough academic instructors through the limited community college programs. Having worked closely with a program for the last two years, one of the biggest barriers was finding consistent instructors. This shortage put a limitation on the number of cohorts that could be started and ultimately the number of Surgical Technologists entering the workforce.

I strongly believe that including NCCT as an accrediting body to the current surgical technology certifying bodies would enhance the workforce and quality of care to patients significantly. We have been impressed by Health STAR Initiative's proposed clinical programs and the outline on how potential surgical technologists can have on the ground experience in addition to matching clinical education currently required.

The Health STAR Initiative is committed to infection prevention, and the clinical program development committee is focused on ensuring safe protocols and processes are utilized to protect patient safety. Apprenticeship students will demonstrate basic competency and knowledge prior to being allowed to enter to operating room environment, and adequate supervision by an appropriate credentialed staff member will be required at all times.

Further, we have been impressed by the infection prevention continuing education that has already been made available by OASCA and the newly formed partnership with Health STAR Initiative. Next month, there is a webinar that covers Best Practices in Surgical Instrument Reprocessing, and a second session on Conducting a Moisture Assessment. This is taught by nationally recognized faculty and will provide an interactive opportunity for staff to learn more about infection prevention.

Thank you for your time and consideration to support HB 2464.

Sincerely,

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Executive Director,
Surgery Center of Southern Oregon