

Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Knopp, and members of the Senate Committee on Health Care:

For the record, my name is Andra Buzoianu and I am a senior nursing student with Oregon Health and Science University.

I am writing to talk about surgical smoke in the Operating Room, an issue that can negatively impact the health and well-being of every staff member working in this setting, as well as patients.

As a nursing student I have not spent much time in my internship in the operating room. In fact, I only started my internship in the OR in 2021. Unfortunately, I have been shocked to notice that during all of the surgeries I have been a part of, none of the surgeons has used a smoke evacuator device, although the equipment is easily available. When I asked a handful of surgeons why they choose not to use the smoke evacuator, the answers I received were: "it's inconvenient to set up", or "it's more expensive", or "I only use the bovie for 10-15 minutes, we're not inhaling that much smoke". As you can imagine these answers were not what I expected, and I was disappointed with the responses I received. Patient safety was not the first argument given for choosing not to evacuate smoke. And my health is sometimes in the hands of someone who thinks it's ok to inhale surgical smoke, even if it's only for 10 minutes.

As a health-conscious nursing student who's seeking a career in the OR I have tremendous concerns about being repeatedly exposed to the surgical smoke, amongst other hazardous chemicals, for 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year. The thought of potentially inhaling toxic gases, bacteria, particulate matter and cellular material, and even viruses on a daily basis makes me think twice about the career path I want to follow. The cumulative effect on my health can present anywhere from lethargy, headaches, fatigue, respiratory irritation, and asthma to infertility and cancer. After only 1 month in the OR I had already noticed a change in my respiratory system - I have experienced headaches, cough, eye, nose and throat irritation.

I appreciate the opportunity to tell my story and to advocate for myself and my patients, to advocate for your friends and family who may be affected by the negative effects of the surgical smoke. HB 2622 would ensure that harmful surgical smoke is evacuated from every operating room in Oregon and provide everyone the peace of mind they deserve.