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May 3, 2023

I am contacting you to express my support for HB 3596, a technical fix for HB4106 (2022 Session), which passed unanimously in both the House and Senate Health Committees, 54-1 on the House floor, and 27-2 on the Senate floor. This session, HB 3596 has already passed unanimously through the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care and the House.

The Legislature, after much debate and discussion, overwhelmingly agreed that the current process for training surgical technologists is creating a devastating workforce crisis. HB4106 was intended to allow work based apprenticeships, and concurrent educational opportunities.

The Oregon Ambulatory Surgery Center Association worked with stakeholders to develop HB 4106 in 2022, which aimed to develop a workable apprenticeship program that would streamline the process in a safe manner and enable experienced out of state surgical technologists to enter the workforce in Oregon upon demonstrating competency. Unfortunately, during the rule making process, the bill language was interpreted by the Department of Justice as continuing to require a two year degree before an apprenticeship could begin - - completely contradicting legislative intent. Both the Oregon Health Authority and the Bureau of Labor and Industries indicated that a technical fix would resolve the issue, and restore their ability to start the apprenticeship model.

HB 3596 maintains the ability of the Oregon Health Authority and the Bureau of Labor and Industries to set clear standards for education and experience to certify a highly trained and skilled surgical technologist apprentice student, while also protecting patient safety. The bill reiterates clear Legislative intent, and will help address the shortage of available surgical technologists impacting patients, hospitals and ambulatory surgery centers throughout the state.

Thank you for taking the time to address this workforce shortage issue and for helping craft workable legislation so solutions can help close this gap.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher Skagen". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Christopher D. Skagen
OASCA Executive Director