

Testimony for Senate Health Care Committee 5/20/15 Hearing for HB 2876

My name is Tara Kruse and I am a certified surgical technologist. I am here in support of HB 2876, which puts minimum educational standards in place for surgical technologists in Oregon, there are currently no requirements in place. I went to a program that was heavy on both didactic, and clinical time, and I did well in that program. I can't imagine entering the operating room professionally as a surgical technologist with less than that, even though in our state right now brief on-the-job training is accepted. As a surgical technologist I am familiar with many different surgical cases, and the various techniques different surgeons may use. My preparedness reduces running for supplies during surgeries, which reduces room traffic, which is in turn linked to surgical infection rates. My preparedness also reduces surgical and anesthesia time for the patient. I set up the sterile field, as well as being scrubbed in and helping during the surgeries. My formal training did a lot to prepare me for this, which makes it no mystery to me that studies correlate lower infection rates with facilities using certified surgical technologists. That is not to discount that there are skilled, experienced surgical technologists who were on-the-job trained; that is why the bill has a grandfather clause. The bill also has language to recognize military training. (Fun fact: this career originated in the military.) Additionally continuing education is addressed. Maintaining certification already requires such, and keeping surgical technologist current in our profession reinforces our strength in the surgical team. It is important for an operating room crew to be a team, to have confidence in one another, passing HB 2876 helps operating room circulating nurses, surgeons, certified surgical first assists, and physicians assistants know they can count on the surgical technologist in the room, and it helps keep patients safe. Improving surgical outcomes and lowering healthcare costs through less infections and shorter operating times is a positive win-win. I believe this legislation hasn't happened before because patients didn't know that a member of their surgical team had no required training. There is currently a national trend to put educational standard requirements for surgical technologist in place, and I am hopeful that Oregonians will be next on the list to have such assurances. Should anyone in this room ever need surgery I wouldn't want them to wonder if the person charged with protecting the sterile integrity of the surgery, the person keeping their injections organized on the back table, the person handing the proper suture and implants to the surgeon, and sometimes that person with their hand literally on, or in, your heart- your surgical technologist- has any formal training.

I have seen the need for this bill, which is why I got involved. As a volunteer I now recognize more fully how much goes into the legislative process, and can have more appreciation for what you do for Oregonians. As an Oregonian, surgical technologist, and former surgical patient, I thank you, the Senate Health Care Committee, for your consideration of HB 2876, and welcome any questions. Thank you.