

Dear Chair Salinas, Vice Chairs Nosse and Hayden

Founded in 1979, the Oregon Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals (OFNHP), AFT Local 5017 is a union of more than 5,000 nurses and health professionals in Oregon and SW Washington. We know that when healthcare workers are united across job classifications and disciplines, we become a more powerful voice for our patients, our community and ourselves. Through our union, we achieve together what we can't do alone—better wages, affordable health care, a secure retirement, and safer workplaces.

Surgical Smoke in operating rooms is an issue that our members who include operating room nurses and surgical technicians, surgeons, patients, and all others who pass through the doors of an operating room are impacted by.

Our members who are operating room nurses and surgical technicians can spend 10, 15, even 20 hours in an operating room, all the while being exposed to surgical smoke. Studies show that that many hours of exposure to surgical smoke is the equivalent to smoking 20-22 cigarettes.

Our members have devoted their lives to helping people get and stay healthy, educating patients about the dangers of cigarette smoke and refraining from these products themselves. Yet they walk into operating rooms three to five days of their work week knowing that the exposure to surgical smoke is as bad if not worse than cigarette smoke.

While this contradiction is painful, what is more painful are the real, chronic, and damaging physical effects of surgical smoke such as breathing problems, increased risk of lung cancer, rashes, and many many more. More painful still is that there are a wide variety of products that solve this problem that are inexpensive. However many hospitals and surgical centers do not use these products, even if they have them. This is not a nurses vs. hospitals conversation, this is a workplace safety conversation.

We are asking the legislature to do what you do best: move this bill forward, allow for the conversation to continue among lawmakers, advocates and other stakeholders so that we can do what's right for our members, what's right for hospitals, and what's right for Oregonians. We want to have the opportunity to continue this dialog and solve this problem, which has plighted our members for over 25 years.

Thank you

Adrienne Enghouse
President,
OFNHP