



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

In Support of HB2464 / Surgical Technologist Apprenticeship

March 18, 2021

Chair Prusak and Members of the Committee:

As the Chief Sponsor of this bill for two sessions running of this important legislation, I want to urge your support for this well thought out health workforce bill.

I am proud to say that the origins of this bill came from providers in my rural, Southern Oregon district. For years, they have struggled to find enough qualified candidates to hire as surgical technologists. To me, this didn't make sense since these are well paying jobs -- \$25 - \$27 an hour in most cases.

The problem, however, is that the only current pathway to become a surgical technologist is quite limited. Only 3 programs existing in Oregon, and they are hundreds of miles away from my district. This limits the ability of youth, parents, low-income Oregonians, communities of color, rural Oregonians and others to become surg techs.

This bill was developed with the active engagement of Commissioner Hoyle and her apprenticeship staff at BOLI. It also had input from OHA, education providers, the national credentialing groups, local surgical techs, workforce experts, and legislators. It is designed with high standards and safety first and foremost.

We all are familiar with work-based apprenticeships. Of course, we know the highly skilled electricians and plumbers who do really complicated work that requires detailed knowledge and skills to ensure consumer safety. But Oregon has also established a Certified Medical Assistant Apprenticeship program run through the Southern Oregon Workforce Investment Board, near my district, that is producing highly skilled and much in demand CMAs.

This bill today does the same thing. It maintains the existing in-person education path unchanged. But it now allows this new apprenticeship path which maintains all of the key standards, requires compliance with all existing laws and regulations, but opens up the profession in a way that will help expand availability to a more diverse set of Oregonians, while meeting the growing needs of a growing workforce. This is a common-sense bill, and I urge you to pass it and help ensure that more of our constituents can move into this well paid, promising health care field.

Sincerely,

Duane Stark

State Representative

House District 4