



Testimony in Support of House Bill 2622

February 2, 2021

House Committee on Health Policy

Deborah Riddick, JD RN

Good afternoon Chair Prusak, Vice Chairs Salinas and Hayden, and members of the committee. My name is Deborah Riddick. I am the Director of Government Relations for the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). We represent 15,000 registered nurses throughout the state and the Nurse Practitioners of Oregon. The ONA supports HB 2622 which would require hospitals and ambulatory surgical centers to use smoke evacuation system during surgical procedures likely to generate surgical smoke.

HB 2622 provisions are offered as a remedy to unregulated problem of surgical smoke evacuation that subjects surgical staff and patients to avoidable harm and preventable infection. According to the Center on Disease Control, surgical smoke contains “[t]oxic gases, [v]apors and particulates, [v]iable and non-viable cellular material, [v]iruses, [b]acteria.” And although research has not been performed to determine all the possible chronic conditions that could result, “transmission of human papillomavirus (HPV) through surgical smoke from lasers has been documented”; <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/healthcarehsp/smoke.html>. Given the flurry of questions and broad public concerns about the transmission of new strains of deadly viruses and virulent bacteria, reasonable precautions should be mandated to protect vulnerable patients and the entire health care workforce from exposure.

Last session, a work group was convened to discuss the issue and consider solutions to this problem. During the convening, lack of updates to federal OSHA guidelines were held as a contributing factor. In fact, as surprising as it may seem, OSHA’s website indicates that no specific standards even exist; <https://www.osha.gov/laser-electrosurgery-plume>. This is unacceptable and the State of Oregon should continue to lead the nation in advancing health care standards and practices. Rather than maintaining basement standards simply because it’s allowable, Oregon consistently raises the bar because it’s the right thing to do.

The members of ONA, who provide a disproportionate share of services throughout our health system and bear an increased risk of exposure, support HB 2622 as a measure long overdue. We request that you support our frontline workers with the passage of HB 2622.