



February 7, 2022

Chair Holvey, Vice-Chair Bonham, Vice-Chair Grayber, and members of the House Committee on Business and Labor.

Thank you for the opportunity to express Samaritan Health Services **support for HB 4106**. Samaritan Health Services (SHS) is a not-for-profit network of hospitals, clinics, and health services caring for more than 250,000 Oregonians in the mid-Willamette Valley and central Oregon Coast. HB 4106 will help address the critical shortage of Surgical Technologists that is being experienced by many hospitals within the state of Oregon, Samaritan included.

Surgical Technologists are crucial members of the Operating Room team and directly impact efficiency and patient care. They are specialists in their role, directly assisting the surgeon and optimizing care outcomes. The low volume of accredited Surgical Technology programs in Oregon has had a negative impact on our daily operations. While the recent resumption of a local community college surgical technology program, which were suspended during the pandemic, is helpful, our staffing needs in this area far exceed the graduates available and this has been the case for some time. For context, we currently have 11 Surgical Technology positions posted, and the average time for SHS to fill these positions is 174 days, or 5.72 months.

Samaritan manages various workforce development programs and healthcare apprenticeships are a key strategy. We currently participate in a Medical Assistant apprenticeship program and have found it to be highly effective in training and retaining exceptionally qualified Certified Medical Assistants. Given this success, we are eager to expand the apprenticeship model to other healthcare careers that would be a similarly good fit and Surgical Technologists are certainly at the top of that list. Apprenticeships programs require specific trainings, and in the case of surgical technology, would be pathway that still leads to credentialing. Having a Surgical Technology apprenticeship program available would be a benefit for our current employees and community workforce. This would provide accessible career opportunities in our community and provide a solution in creating a workforce that is desperately needed in providing essential, safe care for our community. Future surgical technologists would not have to upend their lives to move near a program, and instead could learn where they live and organically creating the workforce within their community across the state, especially in rural regions.

Samaritan Health Services supports HB 4106 because it will help fill a workforce gap, provide professional development opportunity for employed staff, and do so via a safe and effective program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Bouska".

Bill Bouska, MPA
Director Government Relations
Samaritan Health Services