

February 7, 2022
Oregon House Committee on Business and Labor
900 Court St., NE, Room 453
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: HB 4106, allows a person employed by a health care facility to practice surgical technology if person enrolled in or has completed specified apprenticeship program

Chair Holvey, members of the committee, for the record, I am Rachel Bruce, the director of the surgical technologist (ST) program at Linn Benton Community College. This testimony doesn't necessarily reflect the opinion of LBCC, but is from my own experience.

A little history of our program. The surgical technologist program at LBCC, accredited through CAAHEP, was created in response to the law passed in 2017. Our program's didactic is taught via LMS, learning module system, online, and was specifically created to make it easier to reach the rural communities in Oregon. We have in-person, hands-on labs once a week at our Lebanon campus and a Medford location, created in partnership with Rogue Community College. The previous director was in the process of developing a partnership with Central Oregon Community College in Bend, offering a lab location there as well. My plan is to revamp that program for fall 2023.

LBCC's ST program was inactive for about a year until I was hired in July 2021.

The program at LBCC has an enrollment capacity of 18 students per cohort and we educate 2 cohorts per year, equalling 36 students per year. Right now we have 6 students in Southern Oregon, 4 will complete clinicals in Medford, 2 in Grants Pass, and 10 students (two students didn't meet requirements their first term) in Lebanon, one will complete clinicals in Lincoln City, one Newburg, 3 Corvallis, 3 Springfield, and 2 in Bend.

I have been a surgical technologist for over 20 years and have experience working in a variety of facilities ranging from large trauma centers to small physician-owned surgery centers, the last 15 years have been in the Willamette Valley. I agree that our area is in need of surgical technologists, but there is a National shortage of all healthcare providers in general. The answer to this is NOT decreasing the requirements needed to practice. Working as a surgical technologist is a very stressful and intense job that requires a solid understanding of a wide variety of in-depth surgical concepts. I don't feel that an apprenticeship program can provide this type of education. I'm also worried that apprenticeship programs will lack necessary oversight. All three of the programs currently accredited in Oregon are rigorously monitored by CAAHEP, ARC/STSA making sure standards are up to date and followed.

I am against this bill and feel a better solution would be for healthcare institutions to sponsor or give scholarships to people seeking new career paths, asking for a certain number of years of contracted employment after their education is finished. I know similar programs are in place for nursing, but I haven't seen anything geared towards surgical technologists. This would uphold the needed educational standard, funnel STs to specific facilities where they are needed, and help get people facing financial hardships a chance to go back to school.

Thank you for your consideration,

Rachel Bruce