



## **Samaritan Health Services Supports HB 3596**

Samaritan Health Services (SHS) is a not-for-profit network of hospitals, clinics, and health services caring for more than 250,000 residents of the mid-Willamette Valley, central Oregon Coast, and rural communities in Linn, Benton, and Lincoln counties. Thank you for your consideration of HB 3596, which would help address to the critical shortage of Surgical Technologists that is being experienced by many hospitals within the state of Oregon. When HB 4106 was passed in 2022, the hope was to open more avenues for training for this important role, particularly for apprenticeships. Passage of HB 3596 will ensure that happens.

Surgical Technologists are crucial members of the Operating Room team and directly impact efficiency. They are specialists in their role directly assisting the surgeon and optimizing outcomes. The low volume of accredited Surgical Technology programs in Oregon have had a negative impact on our daily operations. Samaritan Health Services has hired 15 Certified Surgical Techs in the past two years. Almost 50% of these were new graduates from our local community college surgical technology programs. Our staffing needs in this area far exceed the graduates available. The other option to fill this need is to hire Operating Room RNs, and that is not sustainable, as there is a shortage of OR RNs also. We currently have ten Surgical Technology positions posted, and the average time for SHS to fill these positions is 182 days (6 months). SHS has some surgical technology positions posted since July 2020, with no applicants. Passage of HB 3596 will allow the possibility of apprenticeships that would become an additional stabilizing training pipeline for these professionals.

Having a Surgical Technology apprenticeship program available would be a benefit for our current employees and community workforce. This would provide 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. The apprenticeship model is an important additional training pathway, ensuring the same level of training but in a format that better fits the busy lives of working adults who are hoping to reskill into a new career.

Samaritan Health Services supports HB 3596, because it provides a technical fix to HB 4106. This will help fill a workforce gap, provide professional development opportunity for employed staff, and do so in a safe and effective program. We respectfully request that the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care supports HB 3596, which would allow for the creation of a pathway to Surgical Technology apprenticeship programs in the state of Oregon. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Bouska". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bill Bouska, MPA  
Director Government Relations  
Samaritan Health Services