

Good afternoon Chair Jackson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Casey Glassburner (spelled) and I am a Certified Surgical Technologist and have been for almost 10 years. I am also currently serving as the President of the Nebraska State Assembly of the Association of Surgical Technologists. Today I will be providing testimony on the Educational Pathway for and Supervision of Surgical Technologists as well as the benefit of establishing a surgical technologist registry.

Currently in the state of Nebraska and across the country, surgical technologists are educated in surgical technology programs that are accredited by either CAAHEP (Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs) or ABHES (Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools). There are over 500 accredited surgical technology programs across the country ranging in length from 18-24 months with most resulting in graduates receiving an Associate's of Applied Science Degree in Surgical Technology. By 2021 all accredited surgical technology programs are required to be associate degree as all diploma programs are being phased out in an attempt to create uniformity among the education of all graduates from accredited surgical technology programs.

There are 2 CAAHEP accredited surgical technology programs in the state of Nebraska. One is located in Omaha at Nebraska Methodist College and the other is located at Southeast Community College in Lincoln which also offers their program online to serve the western part of the state. Both programs are associate degree programs and include several months of clinical education to adequately prepare graduates for success in the field following graduation. Students in the surgical technology program at Southeast Community College spend 700 hours in the actual operating room setting and scrub around 150-200 cases prior to graduation.

Surgical technologists are allied health professionals who play an integral role as a member of the operating room team. They work under the direction of hospital and clinic policies as well as under the supervision of the independent licensed practitioner and the registered nurse throughout the preparation, performance, and clean up of a surgical procedure. Their main focus is assisting the surgical team to ensure the surgical procedure is performed as efficiently as possible by anticipating the needs of the team while maintaining the highest level of aseptic or sterile technique to ensure the patient does not acquire a surgical site infection. Surgical technologists are the only member of the surgical team that is specifically trained in aseptic technique and the methods that should be utilized to minimize the patient's risk of contracting a postoperative wound infection. Their attention to making sure that all instruments and supplies that are utilized during the procedure are sterile during the preparation for the case and throughout the performance of the procedure directly affects the outcomes upon completion for the patients. Surgical site infections can cause a case that would have otherwise been considered a success to be seen as a failure by the patient and their family.

Creation of a mandatory surgical technologist registry with a competency assessment requirement is an essential step that must be taken to improve surgical patient care as well as ensure that surgical patients throughout the state are being protected from the potential harm that can result from unqualified surgical team members being present during a procedure. Surgical patients do not have the ability to

choose their surgical team like they have the ability to choose their surgeon. These patients deserve to know that everyone in their operating room has at least a minimum level of competency for the role that they are serving in. Currently the surgical technologist is the only member of the immediate operating room team that has no education or competency requirements.

Surgical patients are in their most vulnerable state where they do not have a voice to speak up for themselves. They are trusting that every member of the team has their best interest at heart in every step of their care and that everyone has the base knowledge to provide them with the best outcomes possible. By establishing a mandatory surgical technologist registry we can help give every surgical patient this piece of mind.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this information to you this afternoon and I am available to answer any questions you may have.

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