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To Whom It May Concern,

It has come to my attention that there is a discrepancy between how the current law in the state of Nebraska defines how the practice of the surgical technologist is delegated and what actually occurs in the operating room on a daily basis throughout the state. Currently, the practice of the surgical technologist is delegated by the nurse and the surgeon is not allowed by law to delegate any medical task or function to the surgical technologist as they are presently unlicensed personnel. The state of Nebraska also does not currently recognize or credential surgical technologists and does not have a clear definition of the role they are allowed to practice in nor the tasks and functions they are allowed to perform.

I practice alongside surgical technologists on a daily basis in the operating room. These allied health professionals most commonly function in the sterile role as a member of the surgical team that is scrubbed in at the sterile field created around the surgical patient. In this sterile role these professionals perform a broad range of tasks and functions that assist in expediting the surgical procedure as I direct them to perform. At this level of care, it is extremely imperative that all members of the surgical team are certified and have completed acceptable training establishing their competence. It is also necessary to establish a license for surgical technologists so that I am able to delegate medical tasks and functions to them with the 1898 ruling in State of Nebraska vs. Howard Paul which prohibits delegation of the practice of medicine to unlicensed personnel.

I would urge the Nebraska Medical Association to support moving forward with establishing a license for surgical technologists in the state of Nebraska, as well as clearly defining the qualifications that are required by professionals to practice in these roles and establishing a scope of practice defining the tasks and functions the surgical technologist is allowed to perform.

Patients assume that all personnel caring for them are properly educated and have appropriate clinical experience; however, surgical technologists remain the only members of the surgical team who is not required to meet threshold educational and certification criteria to practice in their areas of expertise. Regulation of this professional will eliminate this disparity and ensure that all personnel caring for patients undergoing surgery are appropriately educated and meet minimum continuing education standards. It will also legally allow the delegation of medical tasks and functions to surgical technologists which are already occurring daily in operating rooms across the state.

Thank you for your consideration to support creation of a license for surgical technologists which will in turn continue to support quality care for the surgical patients of Nebraska.

Sincerely,



Gregory W. Heidrick, M.D.