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TO: Diane Jackson, Chair
Members of the Technical Review Committee

FROM: Elisabeth Hurst, Director of Advocacy

DATE: July 8, 2015

SUBJECT: Public Hearing Testimony

The surgical first assistant credentialing review application stemmed from an August 2013 facility survey at Sidney Regional Medical Center that brought to the forefront a Nebraska law prohibiting physicians from delegating tasks to unlicensed health care practitioners. Soon after, the State of Nebraska issued a cease and desist order informing facilities that it was illegal for a physician to delegate in this manner. Specifically, as identified in the survey, the physician could not delegate surgical tasks to the surgical first assistant.

Linda Shoemaker, the Compliance Officer and Risk Manager at Sidney Regional Medical Center, began researching the role of surgical first assistants in Nebraska. She quickly found that surgical assisting, like many allied health occupations, is not regulated in Nebraska and began the preliminary research for developing licensure of surgical first assistants. Linda drafted a white paper and submitted it the Nebraska Hospital Association's Board of Directors for review.

The NHA Board of Directors voted to sponsor the effort of Sidney Regional Medical Center and to partner through the credentialing review process for surgical first assistants. Shortly after, a stakeholder group was convened to further develop the application. The collaboration resulted in the application submitted on February of this year, and the credentialing review process officially began.

And here we are. We can all agree that this has been a learning experience. Much information has been cast upon you and we all know a lot more about how allied health professionals support the surgical team.

The primary goal of this proposal is patient safety through increased regulation of surgical first assistants and surgical technologists. Licensure of surgical first assistants will ensure that individuals in the field of surgical assisting meet a standard of education and training that the State of Nebraska determines is appropriate for this role. Surgical first assistants possess training specific to the intricacies involved in the surgical first assisting position and licensure will allow them to function as trained under the law.

Licensure will also increase access to services across the state. Surgeons will have greater access to the assistance necessary for providing services to patients in need. A licensed surgical first assistant can increase the availability

of appropriate surgical staff. This will promote cost-effective employment of qualified individuals to assist surgeons, enabling them to provide a higher quality of care while lessening the risk of surgical procedures.

Additionally, licensure of surgical first assistants will boost workforce development as more individuals seek out the training necessary to fulfill licensure requirements. Those functioning as a surgical technologist will realize the benefits of attaining increased education. Increased demand will create new training programs in Nebraska, which will boost the workforce for this occupation.

Finally, creation of a mandatory registry for surgical technologists with a competency assessment requirement will assist the State of Nebraska in ensuring that individuals functioning in the surgical technology occupation meet the competency requirements necessary to provide quality care in the State.

To highlight the application proposal, amended from its original form, there are several individuals who will testify as part of the applicant group.

Linda Shoemaker will review the educational pathway that an individual follows to become a surgical first assistant. She will also discuss the supervision of a licensed practitioner of surgical assisting under this proposal.

Chris Wilson, a surgical first assistant by training, will review the proposed scope of practice for this license and explain the trainee exemption which will facilitate training of surgical first assistants in Nebraska.

Casey Glassburner, a surgical technologist and program educator, will explain the educational pathway of a surgical technologist, the supervision of surgical technologists and the benefits of the registry under this proposal.

Dr. Erik Otterberg, an orthopaedic surgeon, is testifying on behalf of the applicant group and the Nebraska Medical Association in support of this effort.

Finally, Bruce Rieker of the Nebraska Hospital Association will discuss the credentialing review criteria and corresponding elements of the proposal.

We appreciate the many stakeholders who have contributed their expertise, time and resources to bring this proposal to its current form. On behalf of the applicant group, I would like to thank all involved.

Additionally, we would like to thank the Nebraska Medical Association, the Nebraska Nurses Association, and the Nebraska Association of Independent Ambulatory Centers for their letters of support.