



Senate Bill 874 Hospitals and Ambulatory Surgical Facilities- Surgical Technologist Position:

Oppose

3/7/24

Senate Finance Committee

I am Jennifer Knopp, the Director of Surgical Services for Vision Innovation Partners (VIP). VIP owns and operates ten Ambulatory Surgery Centers (ASC) in the mid-Atlantic region, including six in Maryland and four in Pennsylvania. Our premier group of ophthalmology ASCs performs over 32,000 surgeries annually. All ten of our ASCs are AAAHC accredited and receive outstanding performance reviews. I am writing as this bill would significantly affect our facilities as we currently employ 26 surgical technologists; only 6 have their certification.

Vision Innovation Partners strongly opposes Senate Bill 874, which prohibits ambulatory surgical centers from hiring a surgical technologist who has not completed a specified program. This would increase the shortage of qualified candidates in our healthcare system and effectively disrupt patient outcomes in our surgery centers.

Our surgical technologists, also called scrub techs, are healthcare professionals whose primary duties are preparing the operating rooms, keeping the environment sterile and well organized, and working closely with the surgical team. They are an invaluable part of the active operating room staff and handle everything from preparing the sterile field to anticipating the surgeon's needs and advocating for patient safety.

Vision Innovation Partners has an onsite orientation training program that each surgical tech must complete to ensure that the standards of care in ophthalmology and eye surgery are met. Many scrub techs come to our centers with a wide range of outside experience, either learning from the military, transferring from one of our clinical offices as ophthalmology technicians, or they bring with them previous job experience with other surgery centers or hospitals with multiple specialties. Prospective surgical technicians currently have many different avenues available to them to enter the medical field, and this bill would limit those who are interested in entering the medical field.

Patient safety and infection control are high priorities in our organization. Our outcomes of low infection rates and high standards of care are proven by our success rates. We follow the highest quality control standards set forth by AORN and AAMI guidelines. By our surgical techs and entire surgical teams following our set protocols and educational standards of care we have achieved a surgical site infection rate that is way below national averages. Our surgical techs are

educated on location and include having a 1:1 mentor until they have reached specific milestones and are ready to scrub independently. Many of our surgical techs have used the experience they have gained at our facilities to go on to nursing school, higher-level jobs with large ophthalmology vendors, and within our VIP Platform.

Ambulatory surgical centers are experiencing extreme difficulties in hiring qualified surgical technicians. In Pennsylvania, where there is already a mandated certification requirement, we have found it extremely difficult to fill vacant surgical tech positions. In one specific instance, we had a center that had an open vacancy for approximately 18 months before we had a qualified candidate in the surgical tech schooling process. She was hired before completing her certification, as there were no other qualified candidates. This vacancy due to the mandate was a huge hardship to the surgical team. Had there not been a mandate requiring certification, the vacancy could have been filled promptly and would not have had such a huge impact on the entire team.

Requiring surgical technologists to be certified will not only cause hardships to the surgical teams experiencing staffing shortages, but it will also further limit many opportunities for individuals hoping to enter the surgical tech workforce. For these reasons, Vision Innovation Partners is asking for an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 874.

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