

## Rep. Smith Sponsor Testimony

Thank you Chairman Lipps and all members of the committee for providing me the opportunity to present HB 455 sponsor testimony and lay out the reasons why Representative Kelly and I think it is a necessary piece of legislation. As a Conservative I am almost always skeptical of government mandates for licensing and registration within the labor force, but I cannot overlook the need for some areas of the market where they are vitally important and common sense.

Some time ago, I learned that if I were to walk into Subway and order a sandwich, the individual preparing my sandwich could, weeks later, assist on an open heart operation as a “surgical assistant” with little to no experience. Now I know that is an over-exaggeration of reality, but the point is in Ohio there are currently no training standards—or any other requirements for an individual to register (or be licensed) with the State Medical Board—in order to assist a surgeon during an operation. There has been a long-time responsibility placed on each hospital, both public and private, to determine the qualifications and requirements set forth for an individual to practice as a surgical assistant. Many hospitals have done a decent job taking seriously that responsibility and choosing wisely who they employ, but the fact is there are no rules in place to ensure minimum education and/or credentialing standards for individuals practicing in this profession.

HB 455 does more than set rules and guidance for those becoming surgical assistants—it ensures that everyone in that operating room is qualified in order to promote the best patient outcome. Engaging in and assisting the operating physician with tasks such as preventing exposure, making incisions, placing catheters into the patient, clamping vessels or tissues, closing surgical sites, and the list goes on—should be functions subject to guidelines and requirements under the State Medical Board of Ohio.

HB 455 would require that all surgical assistants be registered with the State Medical Board. (We have also been developing a substitute bill that mirrors the current version but creates a “license,” consistent with existing State Medical Board duties / responsibilities for other healthcare professionals). The bill creates several options for purposes of registration, including a “grandfathering” provision allowing any surgical assistant who has practiced in Ohio in the last 6 months to be automatically registered. The Board may also register individuals who:

- Have successfully completed a surgical assistant training program during their service in the U.S. military;
- Hold a surgical assistant credential sponsored by the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting or the National Commission for Certification of Surgical Assistants.

Recognizing that hospitals in rural areas of Ohio sometimes experience staffing shortage issues, the bill allows for a waiver process from the requirements for any assistants located in a “physician shortage area,” as defined by the State Medical Board. Registration for applicants must be renewed every two years.

Based on the duties (described in part above) that come with being a surgical assistant, the practical consequences of allowing unqualified assistants to provide patient care can be devastating. There are numerous examples from around the country of patients suffering serious injury due to surgical assistants lacking adequate training and experience. And as many communities in Ohio are experiencing an increase in the need for patient care and a decrease in the number of surgeons, the need for qualified professionals in the operating room is higher than ever before.

Our fellow Ohioans who are being operated on or that will need any kind of surgery in the future deserve to have qualified people in the operating room. HB 455 does just that. Thank you again for your time. Please do not hesitate to reach out to my office with any further questions regarding this bill.