

**Columbus Office:**

Vern Riffe Center  
77 S. High Street, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43215-6111

(614) 466-5786

Rep31@ohiohouse.gov



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# BRIGID KELLY

## STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Chair Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony today on House Bill 196.

Currently, there is no requirement in Ohio that an individual receive any kind of minimum education or training to engage in invasive, hands-on tasks as an assistant to surgeons in the operating room. This is despite the fact that surgical assistants perform a wide variety of functions, some of which have a dramatic impact on patient safety and the procedure's success. Routine tasks performed include: assisting with incisions; placement/securing of wound drains and overall wound care; and changing, suturing and cutting tissue where necessary. Although literature released by the American College of Surgeons indicates that surgical assistants should be adequately trained via national credentialing standards, no such requirement exists in Ohio. Other states—including Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Nebraska, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia—have some type of licensure or registration process that applies to surgical assistants.

HB 196 would create a simple registration process for surgical assistant practitioners, requiring those operating in Ohio to be registered with the State Medical Board. The registration would require evidence of proper credentialing, but the bill also includes a “grandfathering” provision allowing anyone who has practiced as a surgical assistant in the last 6 months to be automatically eligible for approval. Requirements may be waived for registered nurses and physician assistants. We have also developed a “licensure” framework that aligns with the State Medical Board’s existing procedures for approving other professionals to enter into the healthcare field. This will allow us to ensure we are not creating unnecessary barriers to entry into the workforce.

Furthermore, given the COVID-19 pandemic’s financial strain on the state’s healthcare system, we similarly do not seek to increase costs for hospitals. Our bill could facilitate surgical assistants becoming “independent contractors,” which could actually reduce hospital staffing and insurance costs. In addition, 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. Thus, hospitals in rural areas of the state with staffing shortage issues could apply for a waiver where necessary.

In short, HB 196 addresses the increased importance of utilizing qualified surgical assistants in Ohio without adding a burden to workers or to the healthcare industry. We ask your support of this legislation to increase patient safety and the quality of patient care in the operating room. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this important piece of legislation. We would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

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