

**Ohio House of Representatives Health Committee
House Bill 196 (Surgical Assistants) Proponent Testimony
Shannon Heeg, Practicing Certified Surgical First Assistant &
Certified Surgical Technologist Instructor
SW Ohio**

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Chair Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Ohio House Health Committee, my name is Shannon Heeg and I am a Certified Surgical First Assistant (CSFA) practicing in Cincinnati, Ohio. I also served as an instructor at Cincinnati State in the Surgical Technology program for the past six years. I worked in several different hospitals in the Northern Kentucky and Southwestern Ohio areas, serving as a Certified Surgical Technologist (CST) for 11 years and a CSFA for 14 years. I have been a member of the Association of Surgical Technologists (AST) since 1997 and am a current member of the Association of Surgical Assistants (ASA).

I pursued a career in healthcare because I want to provide the highest quality of care possible to the public. After spending a number of years actively working in the field, I wanted to share my knowledge by teaching surgical technology students the finer points of working in the operating room. Additionally, in my role as a CSFA, I am often sought out to precept surgical assistant and physician assistant students, as well as help train residents when they are working as an assistant alongside their attending surgeon. My vast experience working in both the roles of CST and CSFA has taught me that while each is very important in the operating theater, they are indeed very different roles. The role of the surgical assistant is much more aligned to that of the resident, surgical physician assistant, or even a secondary surgeon. Due to the advanced knowledge and training required, and the invasive nature of tasks performed in this position, I believe surgical assistants should be licensed in the state of Ohio, and therefore am testifying in support of HB 196.

As a CSFA, I am responsible for positioning the patient for surgery, ensuring the patient is well supported on the operating table and no extra pressure or stress is placed on joints. I coordinate with the surgeon to determine a plan of action for the surgery while the nurse preps the patient, then work with the CST and/or the surgeon to drape the patient for the procedure. Under the surgeon's direct instruction, I perform basic procedures that include, but are not limited to, cutting tissue, inserting trocars, placing and suturing in drains, running the laparoscopic camera, manipulating tissue with various instruments both in open and laparoscopic cases, suturing and ligating vessels, dissecting tissue planes, assisting with hemostasis, retracting and exposing the surgical site, closing wounds per surgeon's preference, and applying dressings to the surgical wounds.

While both the surgical assistant and the surgical tech perform duties in the operating room, their specific jobs are very different. The surgical assistant works in a more "hands-on" capacity with the patient during the surgery, while the surgical tech is more involved with preparing the equipment and materials needed for the surgery and selecting and passing necessary instruments during the case. Additionally, the surgical tech will help in preparing the

OR for surgery, works with the circulating nurse to ensure equipment in the OR is set up and working properly, checks case carts and supplies to make sure everything is ready before the case, and scrubs in and sets up the back table and instruments prior to the patient's arrival in the room. Currently in the state of Ohio, there are a great deal of job openings for surgical technologists, and the vast majority of our students have job offers prior to graduation.

Both surgical assistants and surgical techs can become certified through the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA), and surgical assistants can also become certified through the National Commission for the Certification of Surgical Assistants (NCCSA)—both require students to complete accredited programs prior to sitting the exam. While I believe a certification is sufficient for surgical technologists, I think surgical assistants should hold a state-issued license in addition to their certification. The reason for this is that the job of the surgical assistant is much more invasive and comes with a higher liability than that of a surgical tech. Therefore, it is important to ensure the safety of the public by making sure all practicing surgical assistants are equally educated and qualified to meet a set standard.

Thank you for allowing me to testify, and I can be reached by phone or email to answer any questions you may have.

Shannon Heeg, CSA, CST