



**Senator Andrew O. Brenner – 19<sup>th</sup> District**  
**Senate Health Committee**  
**September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021**  
**Senate Bill 161 – Sponsor Testimony**

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for affording me the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 161. This bill would require hospitals that perform surgeries to adopt and implement a policy designed to prevent human exposure to surgical smoke.

For those of you who may be unfamiliar, surgical smoke is an aerosol produced by the thermal destruction of tissue by use of lasers or electrosurgical devices. Surgical smoke is not only a nuisance because of its repulsive odor and tendency to obstruct the surgeon's view of the surgical site, it has also been shown to contain a number of harmful substances. These include toxic gases, vapors and particulates, viable and non-viable cellular material, viruses, and bacteria. There has even been documented transmission of human papillomavirus (HPV) through surgical smoke from lasers.

Over 500,000 healthcare workers are exposed to surgical smoke each year. There is very little known about the long-term effects of chronic exposure to surgical smoke, but short-term symptoms can include irritation, headache, cough, and asthmatic reactions. That information comes from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, which is an organization within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that focuses on the study of worker safety and health.

The issues surrounding surgical smoke were first introduced to me by a constituent named Kay Ball who is not only a former nurse but also a professor of nursing at Otterbein University. She is an advocate and an educator on this topic, having done a significant amount of research on it herself.

Essentially what both she and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health have found is that the most effective way to protect healthcare workers from surgical smoke is to utilize equipment designed to capture and neutralize surgical smoke at the point of origin, before the smoke makes contact with the eyes or respiratory tract of individuals. Senate Bill 161 would require hospitals that perform surgeries to adopt and implement a policy designed to prevent human exposure to surgical smoke using such devices.

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health Committee, it is my hope that this bill will help protect the nurses and doctors who have worked so hard, and continue working very hard, to protect us. Thank you again for hearing my testimony on this important issue. I would be happy to answer any questions the Committee members may have.