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Dear Senator,

Senate Bill 161 (surgical smoke evacuation) was introduced in April 2021 (by Senator Brenner and co-sponsored by Senator Thomas) and assigned to the Senate Health Committee. I'd like to take some time to explain the hazards of surgical smoke and its impact on my professional tenure in the operating room and Perioperative Service.

My role is as an educator for Perioperative Services. I have spent 24 years in this area, and the last 21 years has been in the operating room. I would like to describe to you the effects of surgical smoke I have experienced. In 2001, I started with symptoms of a runny nose and continually watering eyes. My symptoms persisted through the next six years, while I was working in the operating room daily, as a circulator and educator. I assumed most of these symptoms were related to environmental allergies. Other symptoms I have experienced have been headaches, usually associated with sinus congestion symptoms. These symptoms persist even today. I know that I am not alone, as many of my colleagues' state having the same symptoms.

After reviewing the most current research on surgical smoke hazards, I have concluded that my symptoms can be linked to long term exposure to surgical smoke. For example, using an electrosurgical unit on 1 gram of tissue is like inhaling smoke from six cigarettes in 15 minutes. The effects of cigarette smoke on humans is well documented. Long time exposure to fine particulate air pollution (surgical smoke) is associated with the incidence of cardiovascular disease and death among postmenopausal women. These effects may not be visible now, but the potential risk is not worth the cost of impaired health as I age, when it can readily be avoided by making our operating rooms a smoke-free environment.

Surgical smoke is a workplace and patient safety issue that must be addressed. Smoke evacuation devices and supplies have been designed to effectively eliminate and manage surgical smoke. Senate Bill 161 addresses the need for perioperative environments in hospitals and surgery centers to develop a policy to manage surgical smoke to prevent human exposure. For your convenience, here is a link for SB161 as introduced:

https://search-prod.lis.state.oh.us/solarapi/v1/general_assembly_134/bills/sb161/IN/00?format=pdf

Surgical team members (surgeons, nurses, technicians, etc.) throughout Ohio are grateful for your understanding of our passion on this issue and are appreciative of your action to support and pass this legislation.

Sincerely,
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