February 12, 2020
Senate Education and Health: Health Professions Sub-committee

Dear Senator,

I am a surgical assistant who practices in Virginia and want to express my support for HB 1084 for the following reasons.

1. If an instance of surgical harm occurs in the operating room, there is currently no mechanism for the Virginia Board of Medicine to take any action.

Registration in Virginia is voluntary and there are many who practice as surgical assistants in Virginia who are not registered and do not meet the requirements for registration. *Patient safety is at risk when there is no oversight of this profession.*

1. There is presently no statewide accountability, with or without state registration. Theoretically, I could be responsible for an instance of patient harm in Northern Virginia and later, go work at a different hospital in Richmond. *Patient safety is at risk when there is no oversight of this profession.*

HB 1084 will establish a minimum competency standard for the practice of surgical assisting. Enacting this bill will allow the Virginia Board of Medicine to receive, investigate and take action on reports of patient harm caused by surgical assistants.

1. As a surgical assistant, I perform in procedures that place individuals at risk. After the surgeon, makes the first incision, I may be making subsequent incisions for trocar insertion, harvest veins for a cardiac or vascular procedure, and assist in implanting devices for joint replacement. I often manipulate vital organs in a search for a tumor, and evacuate blood and other bodily fluids to aid the surgeon to visualize the operative field. My hands are constantly inside a human body.

The Virginia Department of Health Professions has determined that the duties of the surgical assistant pose a high risk of harm to patients which is directly attributable to the nature of the practice and have recommended licensure as the least restrictive means of protecting the public and ensuring the minimum qualifications of surgical assistants.  *Patient safety is at risk when there is no oversight of this profession.*

1. HB 1084 leaves no one behind. This Bill will follow the same grandfathering structure as the earlier registration bill. Currently certified surgical assistants, military trained surgical assistants and those practicing in Virginia as surgical assistants prior to the enactment of the Bill are included.

The lasting value is that all who practice as surgical assistants are accountable within a licensure system.

I am asking for you to support this bill.

Sincerely,

Name
Address