

My name is Kristina Mick, I live in Holton, KS, and I am from District 1. I am currently the ***Surgical Technology Program Director and Instructor at Washburn Institute of Technology in Topeka, KS.*** I am also a practicing **Certified Surgical Technologist (CST)** at *Holton Community Hospital* in Holton, KS. I have been a Surgical Technologist for 8 years, and I am a graduate of the program that I currently oversee and teach. I come before you as a representative of the *Kansas State Assembly of the Association of Surgical Technologists* for which I have served as Vice-President, Board Member, and now President.

I am here today in support of Senate Bill 338 relating to the Certification of Surgical Technologists practicing in the State of Kansas. As an Educator, I support this bill for many reasons but mainly because I understand the importance of formal training before entering the surgical arena.

A surgical technologist is someone who stands shoulder-to-shoulder with a highly-educated and skilled surgeon. We serve as their "right hand man." As surgical technologists we are expected to be one-step ahead of the surgeon's every move. Having formal training and becoming certified prepares a person for this type of responsibility and lays a foundation of skills to build upon. With formal training through nationally-accredited programs, surgical technology students learn the importance of everything from sterile technique to the legal consequences of violating patient confidentiality; the students also develop their "Surgical Conscience."

These are all vital qualities that any surgical technologist *should* possess but that **all** Certified Surgical Technologists (CST) **do** possess. My program is 9 months in length with an option to continue and obtain an Associate of Applied Science in Surgical Technology. Within my program, students are required to "scrub" at a minimum 120 surgical cases in various specialties and roles. This clinical experience gives them a well-developed, critical foundational and often advanced knowledge. It also prepares them to pass the certification exam to earn their CST.

As a practicing Certified Surgical Technologist (CST), I understand the value of the training I received as well as the training that I continue to get by completing required continuing education credits in order to maintain my CST credential and certification. By maintaining my certification, it keeps me current on practices in the operating room to ensure my patients are as safe as possible.

A surgical patient expects that all staff involved in their care are well-trained and equipped to deal with any unknown that may arise during surgery. Multiple other Allied Health Professionals -- from Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA) all the way up to Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNA) -- are expected and required to maintain their certifications and licenses to work. Surgical technologists should be held to that same responsibility and standard, as we are the patient's front line of defense against infection and responsible for

proper specimen collection, and passing of intra-operative medications to the surgeon. Without a clear and expert understanding of these surgical duties we put patients at an increased risk for infection.

The State of Kansas has seen a rise in infection rates for bowel cases. While there are many factors that go into those rates, a surgical technologist is the orchestrator of strict bowel technique during these procedures, and they play a direct role in the prevention of cross-contamination of clean-to-dirty surgical instruments, drapes, and gloves. Prevention of related infection comes from formal training and certification in the use of sterile technique.

My current employer, like many in the State of Kansas, does not require a person to be certified to be hired as a Surgical Technologist. They do, however, *prefer* to hire a surgical technologist who is certified and has had formal training from a nationally-accredited program. I feel that mandatory certification is an important step in a positive direction for the surgical technology profession and for patient safety. We, as a State, need to be proactive in this and make certification the norm for every healthcare facility.

Thank You for taking the time to hear from me today. With the support of this Committee, the Kansas State Assembly of the Association of Surgical Technologists would like to make required certification a high-level standard to keep every surgical patient in Kansas safe in the operating room. Please help us in ensuring that your loved ones and even you have a qualified, Certified Surgical Technologist (CST) behind the mayo stand in the event of a surgery.

Thank you,

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Practicing Certified Surgical Technologist