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Pennsylvania Governor Signs Patient Safety Bill Into Law

Harrisburg, PA – October 29, 2020 – Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf signed into law HB81(Kauffman) which requires surgical technologists to complete an accredited education program, pass an accredited surgical technologist exam, and maintain continuing education. Surgical technologists serve as the surgeon's co-pilot and provide surgical instruments and supplies to the surgeon during a surgery. They have a primary responsibility for maintaining the sterile surgical field and ensuring the surgical team adheres to aseptic and sterile technique. During the Covid-19 pandemic, surgical technologists also have been utilized to train other hospital healthcare providers in those patient care procedures.

The Association of Surgical Technologists (AST) has long been an outspoken advocate of certification of surgical technologists.

"Patients undergoing surgeries in healthcare facilities in Pennsylvania will be safer due to new legislation requiring surgical technologists to graduate from an accredited program and maintain certification. As integral members of the surgical team, our patients and surgeons depend on us to adhere to the principles of asepsis in order to decrease the chance of surgical site infections. We are expected to think on our feet and stay a step ahead of the surgeon by anticipating what is needed before being asked, because every minute a patient is in surgery increases the risk for complications associated with anesthesia and blood loss. This legislation is a win for patients across the state of Pennsylvania as it will promote positive patient outcomes during surgery," said Holly Falcon, CST, FAST, President of AST.

"I applaud Representative Kauffman for his tireless effort to get this bill passed. The legislation was a combined central service technician and surgical technologist bill and, therefore, a great team effort by AST and the International Association of Central Service Materiel Management (IAHCSMM)," said Josephine M. Colacci, Esq., Director of Government Affairs for AST. Colacci continued, "Certification of surgical technologists will help drive positive patient outcomes and help to reduce healthcare costs overall."

"Every surgical patient in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania deserves to have a surgical technologist on the team that has been properly trained at an accredited school of surgical technology and is certified by the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting. Surgical Technologists must keep up to date on the ever-changing medical field. The training this profession receives makes sure patients have the quality of care they deserve and expect when they lay on an operating room table. The accredited program for surgical technology address human anatomy, instrumentation, and the newest minimally invasive techniques. As a result of this training, the citizens of Pennsylvania can now have a well-trained surgical technologist working on their behalf in the surgical environment," said Michelle Muhammad, CST, FAST, President of the Pennsylvania State Assembly of the Association of Surgical Technologists.

Ten states in the nation have passed laws related to education and certification of surgical technologists. Numerous other states are actively educating state-elected officials on the surgical technologist role.

The Association of Surgical Technologists is a national, nonprofit association that represents the interests of over 42,000 surgical technologists who hold the CST credential. As the oldest and most widely recognized professional association for surgical technologists, AST's primary purpose is to ensure that surgical technologists have the knowledge and skills to administer the highest quality of patient care. For more information, visit <https://www.ast.org/>.