



Chair Jennifer McEwen
3217 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair McEwen and Members of the Senate Labor Committee,

The Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN) is a national community uniting and empowering operating room nurses, healthcare organizations, and industry partners to support safe surgery for patients and staff. AORN has more than 200 chapters nation-wide, including four in the state of Minnesota. **We write to express our support of the Senate Labor Policy Omnibus Bill, SF3852, and the inclusion of surgical smoke evacuation legislation, SF3948 (McEwen).**

Surgical smoke is the result of human tissue contact during surgery – it contains over 150 hazardous chemicals and carcinogenic and mutagenic cells, including toxic gasses, dead and live cellular material, blood fragments, and viruses. 9 out of 10 surgical procedures generate surgical smoke, and an estimated 500,000 healthcare workers are exposed each year. The average daily impact of surgical smoke to the surgical team is the equivalent of inhaling the smoke of 27-30 unfiltered cigarettes. Surgical smoke is harmful to both staff and patients, causing cancer cells to metastasize and being inhaled by babies in C-section procedures.

The good news is: surgical smoke can be safely and effectively eliminated with available technologies. A smoke evacuator device can capture the smoke at the source, and small amounts can also be safely evacuated using the operating room suction systems already installed in every operating room. SF3948 simply has hospitals adopt a policy requiring the evacuation of surgical smoke for planned surgical procedures likely to generate surgical smoke. The bill allows maximum flexibility for surgical teams and facilities to select and use the equipment of their choice. The costs are minimal, with no construction costs and minimal costs for filters and/or electro-surgical pencils.

In Minnesota, the impact of surgical smoke on our healthcare providers is real and dire. In an AORN 23-24 survey of our MN members, over half of operating room nurses experience frequent headaches, almost half report throat irritation, and a large number have frequent eye irritation, inflammatory respiratory changes, lightheadedness, and some even carcinoma. The same survey found that 95% of respondents indicated their facility does have smoke evacuation equipment, but only 18% always evacuate smoke.

We deeply appreciate Chair McEwen's authorship of this bill and its inclusion in the Senate Labor Policy Omnibus bill this year. At a time when healthcare workers are experiencing burnout and leaving the profession, Minnesota is set to take an important step: protect the health and safety of our OR staff, so that they can protect the health and safety of Minnesotans. We urge members of the Senate Labor Committee to vote in favor of this critical, time-sensitive legislation.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Pennock
Associate Director, Government Affairs
Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN)