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Pennsylvania Governor Signs Bill into Law that Promotes Quality and Patient Safety

Harrisburg, Penn. – October 29, 2020 – Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf signed legislation, HB81 (Kauffman), that requires new central service (CS) technicians entering the field to become certified and undergo continuing education. On February 21, 2019, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives passed this legislation with a unanimous vote and on October 20, 2020, the Pennsylvania Senate followed with a unanimous vote in support of the legislation.

CS technicians are important members of the healthcare team and are playing an increasingly critical role during the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only are CS technicians responsible for ensuring that equipment and instruments used during surgical procedures are properly decontaminated, cleaned, inspected, and sterilized prior to patient use, a growing number of technicians are also now responsible for sterilizing some types of personal protective equipment (PPE), including N95 respirators, under the US Food and Drug Administration's emergency use authorization. Some CS technicians are also sterilizing COVID-19 testing swabs.

The International Association of Healthcare Central Service Materiel Management (IAHCSMM) has long been an outspoken advocate of state certification of central service technicians.

"Pennsylvania patients in our healthcare facilities will be safer as a result of this bill being passed into law. Our central service technicians are the first line of defense in maintaining quality control to prevent and control the spread of infection," said Brian Reynolds, CRMST, CRCST, CIS, CHL, CER, President of IAHCSMM.

"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 IAHCSMM and the Association of Surgical Technologists (AST)," said Josephine M. Colacci, Esq., Director of Government Affairs for IAHCSMM. "Improperly sterilized instruments used in surgical procedures can introduce bacteria into a patient that sets up the risk for infection," Colacci continued. "Central service technicians are part of the team of professionals dedicated to preventing such infections, and certification demonstrates a commitment to patient safety and quality."

New surgical instruments are being introduced regularly, which requires an advanced technical knowledge that only certification will provide, added Sean Weir, CRCST, CIS, CHL, President, Central Service Association of Western Pennsylvania. "Certification will help keep technicians educated on standards-based instrument processing practices, so these professionals can perform their jobs safely and effectively, while keeping quality and patient safety at the forefront."

In addition to Pennsylvania, four other states require certification for central service technicians: New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Tennessee. Numerous other states are actively educating state-elected officials on central service technicians' vital roles and how they relate to patient care and safety.

About IAHCSMM

The International Association of Healthcare Central Service Materiel Management is the premier association for professionals in health care central service/materiel management. IAHCSMM provides structural educational opportunities, professional development and a forum for information exchange to more than 38,000 members and certificants. For more information, visit <http://www.iahcsmm.org>.

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