

**Testimony for PA House Health Hearing  
September 17, 2012**

Mr. Chair and members of the Committee, my name is Michele DeMaeo. I started my career in sterile processing as a teenager by applying at a local hospital and was hired. No previous hospital experience necessary.

I thought I was going to be issuing out bandages, supplies, and surgical instruments for the nursing floor. I was completely wrong. These were complex instruments that needed to be sterilized correctly in order to be used on patients. For example, these are some of the issues I faced as a new technician and they still hold true more than twenty years later:

- Thousands of individually different instruments, all needing unique processing.
- Complex surgical instrument set-ups that had to be memorized and they sometimes did match what was required by the manufacture, but rather the physicians' preference.
- No structured training. Was trained by different people, with no educational experience, all who learned from someone else with the same or less knowledge.
- A lack of proper competency measures.

- A lack of continuing education. (I took the personal time and effort to research and learn on my own because it was not offered where I worked.)

While improvements have been made over the years, technicians need a foundation of knowledge that will only come from certification. Poor techniques result in poor quality outcomes. You cannot sterilize something that is not properly cleaned. You cannot properly clean with any detergent, you cannot sterilize everything on a standardized manner or with the same method. There are core cleaning, disinfection, sterilization, and storage principles that must be taught, understood, refreshed and adhered to in order to produce instruments for every surgical case that is as safe as possible for every surgical patient. To accomplish this, certification is necessary combined with continuing education so that a trainee understands, retains and executes the correct information they are provided. It's a complex role, with complex organisms with serious ramifications if a single mistake is made.

I have worked hard to try to improve our profession for 22 years and to try to lead by example all the while trying to elevate the role to a level it truly is: meaning education, competency and proper quality assurance measures.

Certification provides a means to close a gapping hole in our profession. Certification provides a means for accurate course material, extensive

testing to measure competency, required continuing education that matches technical advances our patients deserve and hospitals must have to help reduce the potential for costly infections or other harm.

I believe in this so much that I am here, while actively dying. It's that important to me. It's important to me that each of you and your friends and family are in not only safe hands in the Operating room, but that those safe trusted hands hold safe to use instruments.

Thank you for your time.