

HB 2541 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Health Care

Prepared By: Oliver Droppers, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 2/11, 2/18

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Defines terms, “ophthalmic surgery” and “practice of optometry.” Allows licensed optometrist to use specified technologies to perform ophthalmic surgery if the procedure is within their scope of practice. Excludes specified procedures, including retinal laser procedures and certain surgeries. Allows Oregon Board of Optometry to adopt rules. Takes effects on 91st day following adjournment sine die.

REVENUE: May have revenue impact, but no statement yet issued.

FISCAL: May have fiscal impact, but no statement yet issued

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Ophthalmic laser procedures, techniques, and potential complications
- Training standards, curriculum, competency, skills, and proficiency of optometrists
- Patient access, safety, and eye health (e.g., glaucoma)
- Training and scope of practice between optometrists and ophthalmologists
- Inclusions and exclusions of services per the bill

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

According to the National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL) (Oct. 2018), optometrists are state-licensed health care professionals, specializing in eye health, who examine, diagnose, and treat various conditions of the visual system including diseases, injuries, and disorders. Optometrists receive a Doctor of Optometry (OD) degree after four years of professional education at a school of optometry. An Ophthalmologist is a medical doctor (MD) specializing in eye and vision care with additional medical training including a MD. Ophthalmologists can treat all eye diseases, perform eye surgery, and prescribe and fit eyeglasses or contacts. According to the Oregon Health Care Workforce Reporting Program, in 2020, there were approximately 822 licensed optometrists in Oregon.

Depending on a state’s practice limits for optometrists, they may perform specified surgical procedures, prescribe medications, and provide visual rehabilitation and corrective lenses. NCSL also describes state's limits on optometrists' surgical authority, which refers to the surgical procedures an optometrist may treat the eye (e.g., laser surgery or eyelid procedures). In 2018, five states allowed for foreign body removal; four states allowed advanced surgical authority, meaning optometrists have laser privileges beyond foreign body removal; and ten states allowed optometrists to perform additional surgical procedures as authorized by a state’s board of optometry (NCSL). From a state policy perspective, scope of practice considerations among optometrists and ophthalmologists often center on patient safety, improving patient access to vision services, and potential cost savings from expanding optometrists' scope of practice.

House Bill 2541 expands the scope of practice for Oregon optometrists.