

Dear House Health Care Committee:

I write you today in support of HB2541. This bill allows Doctors of Optometry to practice to their highest level of education and training. Updating certain statutory provisions, while removing other unnecessary barriers in state law for Doctors of Optometry, is critical in keeping up with the rigorous education and clinical training that primary eye and vision care providers receive today. Ultimately, these updates will provide greater access in the healthcare marketplace for patients to better receive the timely, qualified and often critical care they need.

Currently, 85 percent of primary eye care is provided by a Doctor of Optometry. With an aging population, the number of vision related problems in the U.S. are projected to increase by an astounding 65 percent in the coming years. Without updating the scope of practice for optometrists, 99.9 percent of the population with direct access to optometric vision care is denied access to routine high-quality care in Oregon communities and must incur the added expense of referrals to specialists whose offices are often significant distances away and/or result in long wait times between office visits.

This results in the unnecessary duplication of care and lost time from work, school and other daily obligations for families across the state. In a report released in 2018 by the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) findings concluded, States should consider changes to their scope of practice statutes to allow all health care providers to practice to the top of their license, utilizing their full skill set.

Currently, five states - Alaska, Arkansas, Louisiana, Kentucky, and Oklahoma, permit ophthalmic surgical procedures, YAG laser capsulotomy and trabeculoplasty, under their scope of practice acts. Taking this into account and stretching as far back as 1998 in the case of Oklahoma, there have been no malpractice judgements against optometrists related to these procedures or those proposed in HB2541.

Doctors of optometry are on the front lines of eye health and vision care. In addition to providing comprehensive vision care, we also manage the entire spectrum of ocular diseases. As a legislated profession, our ability to manage these conditions appropriately requires occasional modifications to the scope of practice defined in Oregon Revised Statutes. Technology and optometric training have changed to the point that it is now time to update Oregon statutes to reflect these changes.

It is for the reasons listed above that I support Doctors of Optometry practicing to their full educational authority.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration of this issue. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

Ayla Jade Himmelsbach O.D.