

Dear Chair Prusak, Vice Chairs Salinas and Hayden, and Members of the Health Care Committee,

I am an ophthalmologist in North Bend, Oregon. I am writing to share with you my extreme concerns regarding HB 2541. There are multiple features to this bill that raise alarms. I will focus on the features that are most disturbing to me which center on patient safety!

1. The training for ophthalmology requires 4 years of medical school, followed by 1 year internship, and then at least 3 years of specialty training as a resident in ophthalmology. This totals more than 17,000 hours of combined education and training. This background supplies the medical judgement and surgical experience to perform surgery (laser, needles, blades, burning, freezing, and incisional).

In contrast, training for optometry requires just 4 years of optometry school. In striking contrast, this constitutes only 2,300 hours of clinical training focusing on eye exams and contact lens fitting. This does not constitute comparable and necessary training for surgery and the medical judgement to make decisions about surgery. The difference in training cannot be obtained in the current optometric curricula or in an "add-on" training course.

HB 2541 would allow optometrists to perform hundreds of types of eye surgery. It is not a limited surgery bill restricted to a few uncomplicated eye surgeries. Please ask yourself what level of training you want your surgeon to have to perform eye surgery on you and your family.

2. Current law protects the public by ensuring that persons performing ophthalmic surgery are licensed to practice medicine by the Oregon Medical Board. The Oregon medical board is composed of 10 medical doctors/surgeons and 1 physician assistant. HB 2541 proposed by optometry to expand their scope of practice to include surgery would have this authority overseen by the Oregon Board of Optometry. Membership of the Oregon Board of Optometry does not include medical doctors or surgeons, yet HB 2541 would give the Optometry Board (composed of 4 optometrists and 1 public member) the authority to make decisions regarding necessary education and training.

This bill is an extreme effort to expand scope of practice to include surgery via legislation rather than through education, training, and clinical experience. This is not good for patient safety and this bill should not be passed.

If an optometrist wants to have the scope of practice of an ophthalmologist, the appropriate course would be to go to medical school and complete a residency in ophthalmology.

Thank you for hearing these points of arguments against this bill. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration. And thank you for looking out for patient safety in Oregon!. Please vote NO on HB 2541

Sincerely,
Debra A. Graham, MD