



P.O. Box 716
1864 Columbia Blvd.
St. Helens, OR 97051
503-397-2020 Fx 503-397-7701

P.O. Box 1228
51675 N. Columbia River Hwy.
Scappoose, OR 97056
503-543-6313 Fx 503-543-6349

Optometric Physicians Lena H. Walker, O.D. Thomas A. Chewerda, O.D. Daniel L. Mannen, O.D. Sarah J. Chewerda, O.D.

February 10, 2021

House Health Care Committee
Oregon House of Representatives
900 Court Street NE, H-489
Salem, OR 97301

Dear House Health Care Committee:

I am writing today to ask your support of HB 2541. This bill allows Oregon doctors of optometry to practice to their highest level of education and training and would allow all 3 doctors at our optometry practice in Columbia County to continue to provide our patients with the highest level of eye care without having to leave our county.

Currently, 85% of eye care is provided by doctors of optometry, and with an aging population, the number of vision related problems in the US are projected to increase by 65% in the coming years. Without updating the scope of practice for optometrists, many Oregonians, especially in rural counties like Columbia County will not have access to the highest level of eye care and will have to incur the added expense, inconvenience and added wait time of referrals to specialists whose offices are in urban areas, the closest for my patients being Portland and Longview, WA. Due to these factors, many of my elderly patients delay care, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Having to see specialists in Portland results in the unnecessary duplication of care and lost time from work, school, and other daily obligations for our patients. In a 2018 report, the US Department of HHS 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."

Optometric physicians 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.

Five states: Alaska, Arkansas, Louisiana, Kentucky, and Oklahoma, currently permit certain ophthalmic surgical procedures, YAG laser capsulotomy and trabeculoplasty, under their optometric 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.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Chewerda", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tom Chewerda, OD
Family Vision of Oregon, PC
Scappoose and St. Helens, Oregon