

February 11, 2021

Rep. Rachel Prusak, Chair
Re. Cedric Hayden, Vice-Chair
Rep. Andrea Salinas, Vice-Chair
Members of the House Health Care Committee

I am a practicing ophthalmologist at Casey Eye Institute, Oregon Health and Science University, and I am writing to express my significant concerns about HB 2541.

I am not opposed to the practice of optometry. My sister is an optometrist and I work closely with optometrists from all over the state. For the past 15 years, I have lectured on several occasions to various groups of optometrists in Oregon.

However, HB 2541 needlessly places patient eye safety at risk by allowing optometrists to perform ophthalmic surgery, including eyelid surgeries, refractive surgeries, surgeries involving needles, puncture of the cornea, and allowing the use of multiple modalities such as scalpels, lasers, needles, ultrasound, ionizing radiation and by burning and freezing tissue. It would also likely allow optometrists to potentially perform hundreds of different types of eye surgeries because of the way it is drafted. It is not a "limited" surgery bill restricted to a "few uncomplicated" eye surgeries.

The fact that optometrists, who are non-surgeons, would be able to perform all the surgeries authorized in this bill without ever having completed medical school and surgical residency is alarming and places all Oregonians at severe risk of creating two unequal standards of care. There are no shortcuts to the 9-11 years of medical and surgical training needed to safely practice surgery.

HB 2541 also removes important language from the statute that requires optometrists to consult with ophthalmologists on certain complex glaucoma cases. If glaucoma is mismanaged, the consequences include lifelong blindness.

This bill is a serious threat to patient safety. Please vote NO on HB 2541.

Respectfully,

Julie Falardeau, MD