



Representative Rachel Prusak
House Committee on Health Care, Chair
900 Court Street, NE, H-489
Salem, Oregon 97301

February 1, 2021

Dear Chairperson Prusak,

On behalf of the American Optometric Association (AOA) and the 44,000 doctor and student members we represent across the country, I write to you today in support of House Bill 2541. This legislation recognizes the ability of Optometric Physicians to administer the comprehensive care they are trained to provide and offers greater access to qualified care in the healthcare marketplace.

At a time when patients are facing a potential lack of access to primary care, Doctors of Optometry are uniquely positioned and qualified to serve as frontline providers in primary eye care for the vast majority of U.S. patients. Becoming a licensed optometrist requires an extensive undergraduate and professional medical education and clinical training. The optometric program is comprised of four years of extensive post-graduate doctorate level classroom study and clinical training, through intensive, hands-on clinical experience and concentrated disease exposure. The professional education of Doctors of Optometry includes general medicine with a concentration on the study of eye health and vision care. The education focuses on diagnosis and treatment of ocular disease conditions, including performing laser procedures and minor surgical procedures of the eyelids and ocular adnexa.

Currently, 85% 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% in the coming years. Without updating the scope of practice for optometrists, 99.9% of the population with direct access to optometric vision care is denied access to routine high-quality care in your 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 visits.

At a time when so many families are struggling to find the much-needed care they deserve, due to COVID hardships, Oregon Optometric Physicians stand ready to meet this ever-increasing need. **I respectfully ask that you vote YES on HB 2541 when it comes before you.** If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact Daniel Carey with the AOA at dcarey@aoa.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William T. Reynolds, O.D." with a stylized flourish at the end.

William Reynolds, O.D.
President
American Optometric Association

Cc: Members of the House Committee on Healthcare