

Rep. Rachel Prusak
Rep. Cedric Hayden
Rep. Andrea Salinas
Members of the House Health Care Subcommittee

I'm writing to ask you to oppose House Bill 2541. It is a special interest Bill which is definitely not in the interests of patients needing eye care.

I've just retired from 33 years of private practice in ophthalmology in Central Oregon, and am now providing ophthalmology services in Bend at Volunteers In Medicine. While I don't have any financial interest in HB2541, I do have perspective on its likely effects.

HB2541 will not increase access to eye care. Central Oregon ophthalmologists like myself have always made themselves available for prompt evaluation of any potentially serious eye problem. Try calling tomorrow with "new flashing lights and floaters". You'll be seen the same or next day. Referrals from optometrists or medical doctors are treated the same way. Availability is the first key to a successful practice. This is unrelated to whatever wait time one has for a routine eye exam.

Regarding overall cost of care, in our fee-for-service environment, we have unfortunately witnessed increased utilization of procedures as they are performed by more providers. My personal experience is that I found approximately 25 percent of optometric referrals for procedures to be unwarranted. That's better than non-referral for critical issues, but a harbinger of the likely effects of HB2541 if it were to pass.

Finally, the issue of patient safety is always debated in proposed scope of practice expansions, and I'm sure it is uncomfortable to have to referee debates in which you are not the experts. But you must know that the difference between ophthalmology and optometry training is substantial, and it matters. I was in a position to see resulting differences, having been an examiner for the oral exams of the American Board of Ophthalmology, and also one who hired, mentored, and supervised optometrists. The interests of our citizens are best served by ensuring that the care of eye conditions such as advanced glaucoma is provided by ophthalmologists.

Respectfully,

Robert C. Mathews, M.D.