

February 18, 2021

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

Dear House Health Care Committee:

I serve on the Oregon Board of Optometry (OBO) and I want to be sure to state the expressed opinions in this letter are my own, as a member of the optometry profession, and do not represent the OBO. The majority of my 14 years of practice has been spent working very closely with ophthalmology in a co-management setting. Some of my best friends are ophthalmologists and I am lucky to have a great professional relationship with so many. I currently work in Portland at Pacific Cataract and Laser Institute, a co-management surgical center where my days are joyfully spent managing complex surgical cases. I am very involved in the higher-level surgical decision-making process for about a thousand surgeries per year. I am grateful to have this collaboration with and trust from my ophthalmology colleagues.

I write you today in support of [HB2541](#). This bill allows Doctors of Optometry to practice to their highest level of education and training. Updating certain statutory provisions, while removing other unnecessary barriers in state law for Doctors of Optometry, is critical in keeping up with the rigorous education and clinical training that primary eye and vision care providers receive today. Ultimately, these updates will provide greater access in the healthcare marketplace for patients to better receive the timely, qualified and often critical care they need.

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 Oregon 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 office visits.

This results in the unnecessary duplication of care and lost time from work, school and other daily obligations for families across the state. In a report released in 2018 by the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) findings 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."

Currently, five states - Alaska, Arkansas, Louisiana, Kentucky, and Oklahoma, permit ophthalmic surgical procedures, YAG laser capsulotomy and trabeculoplasty, under their 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](#).

Doctors of optometry 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.

To tout any laser procedure as "simple" would diminish the value and skill of both professions. I do however feel YAG capsulotomy, SLT and LPI are three procedures well within my skill set as an optometrist. A quick internet

search yields several ophthalmology practices across the US (and UK) claiming these procedures to be “simple” and “safe” when describing them to their patients.

<https://www.ginsbergeye.com/yag-laser-capsulotomy-in-office-naples/>

https://www.newvisioneyecenter.com/cfiles/blogs/NVBlog_010119.cfm

<https://www.eyesurgeonsofindiana.com/yag-laser-capsulotomy>

<https://mcceyeinstitute.com/services/procedures/posterior-capsulotomy/>

<https://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/resources/patient-information/eye/having-a-Yag-laser-capsulotomy-following-cataract-surgery.pdf>

It is for the reasons listed above that I support Doctors of Optometry practicing to their full educational authority. Every day I manage complex medical cases and have always tried to practice at the top of my scope to provide great patient care. I am confident the regulatory piece of this would have patient and public safety as a top priority.

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,

Ami Halvorson, OD, FAAO