



# OREGON OPTOMETRIC PHYSICIANS ASSOCIATION

STATEMENT BY JANET BAKER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OREGON OPTOMETRIC PHYSICIANS ASSOCIATION  
IN SUPPORT OF SB 187

OREGON SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE - FEBRUARY 14, 2017

Mr. Chairman and members of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of SB 187.

My name is Janet Baker and I serve as Executive Director for The Oregon Optometric Physicians Association (or OOPA) which represents 800 Optometric Physicians, students, educators and eye health industry professionals in Oregon. They, along with their thousands of optometric staff operate in every county across Oregon, providing more than 2/3 of primary eye care to children and families across the state.

As primary health care providers, Doctors of Optometry have extensive and ongoing training to examine, diagnose, treat and manage ocular disorders, diseases, injuries and systemic diseases that manifest in the eye, in addition to serving the vision needs of their patients.

OOPA was one of the key sponsors of the 2013 Children's Vision Bill (HB3000) to ensure that school aged children have eye exams. The Lions Sight and Hearing Foundation has worked successfully with school systems, school nurses, local eye doctors and other nonprofits across Oregon to provide screenings to 180,000 children since 2013. Yet, according to Annie E Casey's Kids Count data from 2015, there are 339,400 school aged children between the ages of 5-11 in Oregon. We have much more work to do.

It is my opinion that children's vision should be a social determinant of health. The vast majority of children enter school without a comprehensive eye exam. Consequently, one in four school aged children have undiagnosed vision, life and sight threatening eye conditions.

They often get misdiagnosed with attention or behavior disorders, medicated, academically and behaviorally tracked, and therefore experience lower academic success and graduation rates, not to mention losing the child like joy of exploration and learning. All of this then results in higher incidents of crime and incarceration, and contributes to lower employment achievement and lifelong earning potential. The public often then bears the financial burden through the penal system and social services, when an early comprehensive eye exam and corrective vision would have revealed likely brilliant children with bright futures.

In 2014, Optometric Physicians first diagnosed 240,000 new cases of diabetes nationwide, as the eye is the only exposed organ in the human body. Oregon Optometric Physicians, along with our primary care partners with whom we often co-manage potentially life threatening medical conditions and our

Ophthalmology partners for eye diseases or injuries requiring surgery – all provide thousands of hours of volunteer health care through programs like the KEX Kids, OOPA's own 501c3 nonprofit Oregon Foundation for Vision Awareness and the AOA Infant**SEE** programs – that provide free comprehensive eye health to children in Oregon who fall outside the criteria for the OHA essential benefits for children's vision or otherwise can not afford care.

Our Oregon Optometric Physicians already provide vision and medical eye health care to children referred from Lions school screenings. We are working closely with them to further strengthen our referral systems to ensure there is follow up and ongoing eye care provided by our doctors in local communities. We are looking forward to working with them to develop minimum clinical guidelines for children's vision screenings and comprehensive eye exams and enhancing the parent communications to connect them with doctors in their own communities.

In closing, we support SB 187 to expand the programs and services required, but not funded, through HB 3000. Thank you very much.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet C. Baker  
Executive Director  
Oregon Optometric Physicians Association  
503-654-5036  
[janet@oregonoptometry.org](mailto:janet@oregonoptometry.org)  
[www.oregonoptometry.org](http://www.oregonoptometry.org)  
[www.ofva.org](http://www.ofva.org)