

DATE: February 10, 2021

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

FROM: Rob Bentley, M.D., Kerry Hagen, M.D., Darell Lumaco, M.D.,  
Rob Mathews, M.D., Donald Plumb, M.D., Paul Stromberg, M.D.,  
Jim Waldman, M.D.

RE: House Bill 2541

We are writing as ophthalmologists who have performed thousands of eye surgeries in many years of practice in Oregon. We urge you to vote no on HB 2541. We believe this bill is a significant potential risk to patient safety in Oregon. Although we have retired from active practice (most quite recently), we will always care deeply about patient safety.

As introduced, HB 2541 would allow optometrists to perform eye surgeries that may involve needles, scalpels, ultrasound, needles, ionizing radiation and burning and freezing tissue. We believe strongly that there are no shortcuts for learning how to perform eye surgery safely. There is always the threat of vision loss, as well as the potential for complications related to patients' overall health that may require emergency medical treatment.

As ophthalmologists, we learned how to perform surgery and manage possible complications through years of medical school, surgical residencies and extensive clinical training. We had literally thousands of education and training hours before we were able to perform eye surgeries on our own.

We have all worked with optometrists whom we respect and value. Their role in eye care is significant. But their education and clinical training to perform surgery are far less extensive than what ophthalmologists have.

HB 2541 does not provide for medical oversight of optometric eye surgeries. Under the bill, the State Board of Optometry would decide what eye surgeries optometrists could perform. Yet that board is made up entirely of optometrists, with the exception of one public member.

In our practices, many of us traveled often in less populated areas of Oregon to perform eye surgeries. The vast majority of Oregonians are now close to an ophthalmology point of service.

We appreciate your willingness to serve our state and to determine the outcome of legislation like this bill affecting Oregonians. As you consider HB 2541, please keep in mind the critical issue of patient safety and vote no. Thank you.