

9 February 2021

Chair Prusak, Vice Chairs Salinas and Hayden and Members of the House Healthcare Committee:

The ophthalmologists in Southern Oregon would like to express our concern regarding HB 2541 introduced by the Oregon Optometric Physicians Association. We ask that you consider the following before making your decision on this extremely important bill that could impact the safety of our communities.

We recognize the value of the optometric community and often work in concert to manage our Oregon residents' eye health. Their service is invaluable. This bill however would greatly expand the scope of practice of optometrists to include surgical procedures which are beyond the level of their curriculum and training. The language of the draft excludes procedures that cannot be performed which leaves the door open for any procedure that is not specifically excluded. The bill also removes the important requirement that an optometrist consult with an ophthalmologist on complex glaucoma cases.

Ophthalmologists are medical doctors who are rigorously trained in medical school, internship, residency and often fellowship. During the clinical training years in medical school and internship, we see complex medical and surgical patients in the inpatient setting. Residency and fellowship further hone our diagnostic and management skills. It goes without saying that there are very strict national standards for a training program to be accredited and for medical residents to satisfy the necessary requirements. Ophthalmologists train to perform surgery through countless number of hours and procedures in the operating room, but more importantly through medical decision making and judgment in the clinic. Recognizing who is and who is not a candidate for surgery is imperative. Identifying a potential complication early could be vision saving.

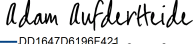
The safety of our Oregon residents is paramount. A safe environment, trained staff and a surgeon who has been trained and performs these procedures regularly are important factors. The eye and surrounding tissues are delicate, and laser and scalpel surgery should be entrusted to an appropriately trained surgeon. No procedure is without risks, and if a complication occurs, one must be prepared to address it. Sound medical judgment is not only cost effective but decreases morbidity.


Proponents of the bill might argue that access to ophthalmologic care is limited. However, 92% of residents are within a 30 minute drive to an ophthalmologist. We, the ophthalmologists in Southern Oregon are always available for a referral or consultation.


We ask that you vote NO on HB 2541 to protect Oregonians and to maintain integrity and quality in the surgical practice of medicine.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Respectfully,


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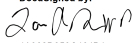
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