

2/11/2021
House Committee on Health Care
900 Court St NE, H-282
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Representatives,

I am a board-certified ophthalmologist who practices Comprehensive Ophthalmology. The purpose of this letter is to express my opposition to HB2541, which I believe poses a safety risk to Oregonians by unduly expanding the scope of Optometric practice.

Proponents of this bill argue that without this change, many Oregonians will be denied access to routine eye care. There is little evidence to support this claim. I would argue that the passage of this legislation will instead have the opposite effect of denying patients access to the high-quality eye care delivered by ophthalmologists. By expanding the scope of optometric practice to include laser procedures and removing the requirement that an optometrist treating patients with anti-glaucoma medications consult with an ophthalmologist in the instance of worsening glaucoma or uncontrolled intraocular pressure, this bill would have the unintended effect of lowering the standard of eye care and increase the risk of irreversible vision loss in these patients.

Already in my practice and in those of my colleagues, we see too many patients who believe their glaucoma is being adequately treated by their optometrist but whose disease is, in fact, not well controlled. It is particularly disappointing to see irreversible vision loss occurring in these patients who have tried to be conscientious about their eye care, only to get a second opinion from an ophthalmologist too late, after they have suffered unnecessary, irreversible vision loss. The passage of HB2541 would only increase the number of these unfortunate patient scenarios. The bill should be rejected to ensure ongoing delivery of safe eye care for Oregonians.

Sincerely,
Hillary Stiefel, MD
Comprehensive Ophthalmology
Casey Eye Institute
Oregon Health & Science University