

February 12, 2021

Dear Oregon Legislators:

As a practicing ophthalmologist surgeon in Oregon, I urge you to oppose House Bill 2541. House Bill 2541 would allow optometrists, who have not gone to medical school or completed a surgical residency, to perform eye surgery.

Eye surgeries are extremely delicate and complicated procedures. Ophthalmologists, through medical school (4 years), internship (1 year), ophthalmology residency surgical training (3 years), and in many cases additional surgical fellowship training (1-2 years) learn how to perform surgery in a stepwise fashion under the careful supervision of skilled ophthalmic surgeons at university hospitals. There is no safe short cut to this necessary training. For years I trained ophthalmology residents at OHSU and I have great respect for the rigorous training process for surgeons. The training has been carefully honed over decades and through national standards to provide Oregonians with the best and safest eye surgery.

Optometrists are our friends and colleagues and are a very important part of the eye care team. But allowing optometrists to perform surgery without having gone through the rigorous surgical training of medical school and ophthalmology residency would be a danger to the safety of Oregonians.

HB 2541 is drafted in a confusing way by listing surgical exclusions but not specifying surgical inclusions. The bill can allow optometrists to perform procedures for which they are not trained.

I could not imagine performing surgery without having gone through my surgical training. Would you want someone without this surgery training to perform eye surgery on your loved ones? I urge you to please vote no on HB 2541 to prevent the people of our state from unknowingly undergoing the risks of having their eye surgeries performed by non-surgeons.

Respectfully,

Rebecca Armour, MD