

Chair Prusak, Vice Chairs Salinas and Hayden, and members of the House Health Committee,

I am writing to you today in opposition of HB 2541. This legislation would permit optometrists, who have neither completed medical school nor surgical residency, to perform scalpel and laser surgery on and around the eye. Learning ophthalmic surgical techniques requires a tremendous amount of skill and training to master. Tissue in and around the eye is extremely delicate, and permanent damage may occur at the slightest misstep. Allowing eye care providers who do not have the years of specialized training specific to ophthalmologists will put patients at undue risk of devastating surgical complications.

Optometrists are our friends and colleagues. We frequently work together to provide high level care to our shared patients. We appreciate their valuable addition to the eye care team. Most ophthalmologists work in concert with optometrists. However, granting optometrists surgical privileges for which they have not been adequately trained is not acceptable.

Ophthalmology residency training in Oregon has been responsible for training hundreds of ophthalmology residents and fellows to perform the types of surgery that optometrists would be authorized to perform if HB 2541 were to be enacted. Many of us are leaders in medical education and we are absolutely certain that the optometric surgical authority proposed in this bill will increase patient safety risks and lower the standards of surgical eye care. For these reasons, we urge you to oppose this dangerous legislation. Thank you for taking the time to read about these concerns.

William Flanary, MD