

## **OPINION: Independent scope commission would center health and safety**

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[https://www.portlandtribune.com/opinion/guest\\_opinion/opinion-independent-scope-commission-would-center-health-and-safety-over-politics-in-oregon/article\\_45740fec-bd34-11ed-8585-f302724ed15f.html](https://www.portlandtribune.com/opinion/guest_opinion/opinion-independent-scope-commission-would-center-health-and-safety-over-politics-in-oregon/article_45740fec-bd34-11ed-8585-f302724ed15f.html)

Today, when a medical provider requests to change their scope of practice under Oregon law, legislators receive the request as one of thousands of bills they'll consider and possibly vote on. But state lawmakers rarely have the medical expertise to fully vet these decisions, nor the time.

This results in debate focused on anecdotes and arguments from invested interests, rather than data and science. The process centers on politics, rather than patient safety and health.

Oregon legislators now have the opportunity to change that.

[Senate Bill 408](#) and its companion bill, [House Bill 2886](#), under consideration in the current legislative session, would establish an independent commission to evaluate medical scope requests and provide an unbiased, nonpartisan perspective to legislators when these decisions arise.

As ophthalmologists, we work as part of an eye health team including practitioners with varying scopes of practice and varying levels of education, training and clinical experience. We know firsthand the complexity of questions legislators need to consider when determining whether to expand a profession's scope of practice.

Lawmakers must evaluate the advanced education, hands-on training and clinical experience required to not only perform a specific procedure, but to diagnose and treat medical complications should they arise.

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On the topic of access, decision-makers must determine whether the new procedures a provider wants to perform are readily available to Oregonians, and whether insurance coverage or other factors also need attention. They should consider liability and accountability mechanisms, and more.

If SB 408 and HB 2886 are approved, these are the types of questions an Independent Scope Commission, made up of affected licensees and stakeholders, would evaluate any time medical practitioners seek a change or expansion in their scope of practice.

The commission would have the time and expertise necessary to fully assess scope requests and to provide the Oregon Health Authority and Legislature with a report documenting their findings and recommendations.

In the Legislature, these conversations are often contentious. Decisions are difficult due to time constraints and the fast pace of legislative sessions, and they can result in serious patient safety consequences.

Not surprisingly, many other states have found separate, standalone commissions to be helpful to advise legislators on these issues.

This bill would only affect future requests — it would not repeal past decisions regarding any provider's scope. It would maintain full authority of state licensing boards and of the Oregon Legislature to vote on any changes.

Patients could rest assured that any change to a health care provider's scope has fully accounted for the benefits and risks to their health and safety, and legislators could have peace of mind their decisions are fully informed for the benefit of all Oregonians.

We urge lawmakers to approve SB 408/HB 2886 this session.

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