

February 19, 2025

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Health and Human Services Committee

RE: Upcoming legislation to expand optometry scope of practice - HF 1011/ SF850 / SF 1144 / SF 1499

Dear Senator:

As the oldest Optometry Board (“Board”) in the nation, our mission statement is *“to protect the public through effective licensure and enforcement of the statutes and rules governing optometry practice to reasonably ensure a standard of competent and ethical practice.”* We have a 123-year history of serving and providing the citizens of the State of Minnesota with safe and effective eye care.

**Public service is our priority.**

We wrote to you last session explaining that it has become increasingly apparent that Minnesota’s Optometric Practice Act is antiquated and needs revision. Minnesota continues to lag behind other states and needs to catch up in its ability to deliver timely, quality care to Minnesotans. Expanding our scope of practice—to fall more closely in line with neighboring states—will help attract new graduates to our state, ensuring better access to care throughout the state.

We write today in support of upcoming bills to expand optometry scope of practice. We support these bills to modernize the optometric statutes for the following reasons:

- Increase timely access to quality care;
- Attract optometrists to practice in our state;
  - Balance supply and demand of practicing optometrists;
  - Meet increasing patient demand;
  - Control costs;
- Benefit patients from the latest medications and technology; and
- More fully utilize optometrist education training.

It is troublesome that the opposition to these bills comes from a small delegation of individuals who do not accurately represent the professions at large or consider the patients a priority. It is further troubling when reviewing donation logs and coresponding votes or simply certain legislators being unwilling to hear a bill due to support that they have received from a very small delegation of individuals.

The Board is concerned about the impasse at the State Capitol and wants to see professional dialogue and movement for the benefit of the patients we serve. These changes are long overdue. We need to catch up with the current and rapidly changing eye care landscape, modernize the scope of optometry practice, and keep pace with the rest of the country.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Eric Bailey, Chair

Dr. Sam Villella, Vice Chair

Dr. Tina McCarty, Secretary

Dr. Leah Colby

Dr. Georgiann Jensen-Bohn

Fernando Alvarado, Public Member

George Bruehl, Public Member