

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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North to the Future

Senator Cathy Giessel Senate District N

Senate Bill 55 Optometry Statute Update

Sponsor Statement

SB 55 modernizes and updates the Alaska Optometry Statute.

This bill moves the continuing education (CE) requirements back into regulation, as desired by the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development. Continuing education is still required by current statute, but the hours and subjects will be determined by the Board of Optometry, as with other professions. The current regulations require more CE hours than the statute subsection deleted by this bill.

SB 55 allows the board to determine prescribed drug schedules anticipating federal regulations that may change again in the future as they did in 2014; that regulation required another statute change, and this bill would allow the board to move in step with its industry.

This bill updates the optometry definition to reflect current education and training, but specifically prohibits invasive surgery. This allows for future new and improved diagnostic and therapeutic procedures as determined by the board, while not having to return to the legislature for every new technological advance. It also defines that optometrists must be qualified for any procedure that they perform.

This bill also further defines and clarifies the prohibited surgical procedures under an “invasive surgery” definition. Alaska optometrists already do superficial surgical procedures such as removal of corneal foreign bodies under current statute, but nothing invasive would be allowed.