

Affiliate



American Optometric
Association

Alaska Optometric Association

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Senator Donny Olson,

On behalf of the patients of Alaska, the practicing optometrists, and the Alaska Optometric Association, I wish to extend sincere gratitude for sponsoring SB 162.

This act, authorizing licensed optometrists to continue prescribing short courses of hydrocodone-containing pharmaceutical agents, is intended to allow for continued use of these drugs for temporary analgesia of eye-related pain. Optometrists in Alaska and throughout most of the United States have been safely and effectively prescribing hydrocodone containing drugs for a number of years as part of their responsibility to controlling pain secondary to eye abrasions, lacerations, other injuries and inflammations as well as following foreign body removals. While these drugs have and will continue to be used judiciously and conservatively by optometrists, when they are needed by a patient they are indispensable. As you are aware, there are other pain-relieving drugs that may be prescribed, however the ratio of side-effect to relief of pain is very favorable for the hydrocodone combination drugs making them an effective choice.

While optometrists today can prescribe hydrocodone-containing drugs, there is a likely change at the federal level coming that is prompting the need for the passage of SB 162. Most hydrocodone-containing compounds that are Schedule III are proposed to be rescheduled by the Food and Drug Administration to Schedule II. This federal change would supersede the intent of current Alaska optometry statute without SB162's necessary addition to the language of our statute to include "a licensee may prescribe and use a pharmaceutical agent containing hydrocodone." In summary, SB 162 is not intended to expand or alter the scope of practice of optometry but rather to maintain it.

Sincerely,
David Karpik, OD
President, Alaska Optometric Association