

Alaska State Medical Association

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March 16, 2015

Honorable Bert Stedman
Alaska State Senate
State Capitol Room 30
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Senate Bill 55

Dear Senator Stedman:

The Alaska State Medical Association (ASMA) represents physicians statewide and is primarily concerned with the health of all Alaskans.

ASMA strongly opposes SB 55 which would expand the scope of practice for optometrists beyond their professional training, lower standards of care and put patients health at risk.

Although the bill appears to be short the expansion to the scope of practice is monumental.

One concern is the expansion of practice to include invasive e surgery. The Alaska State Medical Board has an official position on "Guidelines Regarding the Use of Lasers and Laser Surgery" and ASMA supports and endorses those guidelines. (Attached) Specifically the Alaska State Medical Board adopted the American Medical Association's Policy H-475.989:

"Laser surgery should be performed only by individuals licensed to practice medicine and surgery or by those categories of practitioners currently licensed by the state to perform surgical services."

Not only do optometry schools not currently provide the education and training to perform surgery safely that is comparable to ophthalmology residency programs but even if they started optometrists who have already graduated have not acquired that education and training. The surgeries included in SB 55 include dozens of surgeries with lasers, scalpels, needles, ultrasound and other techniques. None of these surgeries are "superficial" or "not invasive."

Quite simply, expanding the scope of practice for optometrists to include laser surgeries is inappropriate given optometrists' level of training.

In addition to the allowing surgery SB 55 would remove patient protections regarding prescription and administration of pharmaceuticals. Optometrists are not physicians and do not receive training necessary to perform injections into the globe of the eye. Furthermore, this legislation allows optometrists to inject Botox for either cosmetic or therapeutic purposes. Optometrists simply are not trained to perform such procedures.

With regard to prescriptions SB 55 would allow non-physician optometrists to prescribe all Schedule Ia and IIa controlled substances. In 2014, after much deliberation the Alaska Legislature allowed the temporary prescription of substances containing hydrocodone to be prescribed by optometrists. Even this small expansion drew great deliberation and concern. Allowing controlled substances to be prescribed by individuals without appropriate training jeopardizes the health of Alaska patients.

ASMA requests that SB 55 not move from your committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Haugen", with a stylized, flowing script.

Michael Haugen
Executive Director
Alaska State Medical Association

Alaska State Medical Board
Board Issued Guidelines

Subject:	<i>Guidelines Regarding the Use of Lasers and Laser Surgery</i>
Implemented:	January 16, 2004
Revised:	October 25, 2007
<p>The Alaska State Medical Board has adopted the policies of the American Medical Association, following, to be its guidelines to its licensees in Alaska with regard to who may perform laser surgery.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Performance of Laser Surgery</u></p> <p>American Medical Association's Policy H-475.989, Laser Surgery, reads:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">"Laser surgery should be performed only by individuals licensed to practice medicine and surgery or by those categories of practitioners currently licensed by the state to perform surgical services."</p> <p>American Medical Association's Policy H-475.988, Laser Surgery, reads:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">"The board opines that revision, destruction, incision or other structural alteration of human tissue using laser is surgery."</p> <p>The board has further adopted into its policy the American College of Surgeons' <i>"Statement on Surgery Using Lasers, Pulsed Light, Radiofrequency Devices, or Other Techniques"</i> adopted February 9, 2007 by the ACS Board of Regents attached hereto.</p>	