

Questions on SB 55 Optometrists before next hearing:

Senator Stedman Question on SB 55/Optometrists:

Q: Section 3 of the bill was repealed and reenacted. Why was that done and what was changed?

A: That section was repealed and reenacted because drafters thought it was a cleaner way to write it rather than making it full of underlines and brackets for additions and deletions. This is in accordance with the Legislative drafting manual.

The reenacted Section 3 puts the items in the current section 08.72.272 under the authority of the Board of Optometry specified through regulations regarding the prescriptions of pharmaceutical agents for ocular diseases/conditions or emergency anaphylaxis.

But it still prohibits the intravitreal injection, which will be (e) in the new subsection, and the new section denotes that pharmaceutical agents can be used as long as they meet requirements set by standards adopted by the board and are within their scope of practice. Changes in section 3 do not eliminate federal or state registration requirements for administration of controlled substances.

Senator Stoltze wanted to see a geographical map of where the optometrists are in Alaska. He also wanted to know where the ophthalmologists are as well.

Here are locations served by active licensed optometrists in Alaska:

Estimate over 120 Optometrists (From state licensing website)

| | | | |
|------------|--------------|------------|-------------|
| Sitka | Ketchikan | Klawock | Craig |
| Metlakatla | Juneau | Kodiak | Nome |
| Kotzebue | Bethel | Dillingham | Homer |
| Kenai | Soldotna | Anchorage | Eagle River |
| Palmer | Wasilla | Talkeetna | Fairbanks |
| North Pole | Ft Wainright | | JBER |

and a few travel to locations on a rotating schedule: Valdez, Yakutat, Barrow, Petersburg Haines and Wrangell

General ophthalmologists:

Anchorage about 12;

Fairbanks 1 or 2 Wasilla 1 Homer/Kenai 1 Juneau 1

Retinal specialists: All 3 same office in Anchorage.

Senator Stoltze asked if there were any insurance effects with SB55.

There is no insurance consequence to SB 55. The malpractice rates only vary slightly by location nationally, and there is no difference between states that prescribe drugs vs lesser authority.

From the Division of Insurance:

Jane,

Your email was forwarded to me by Micaela Fowler for a response from the Division of Insurance.

The division's authority comes from Title 21 which, in AS 21.42.363, addresses eye care under health insurance. This particular paragraph of Chapter 42 provides that a policy or contract, for individual or group health insurance, issued or delivered in the state that provides reimbursement for service within the lawful scope of the practice of an optometrist licensed under AS 08.72, must provide for reimbursement to a covered person who had the service performed by an optometrist. Please note that it does not mandate that a plan **MUST** provide optometry benefits *but if it does* than it must provide for services performed by an optometrist. While I am certainly not an attorney; it would appear that the draft bill would make the dispensing of a pharmaceutical agents within the lawful scope of the practice.

As for any impact on rates, it really is hard for us to quantify the impact this bill would have on any health care rates. However we can say that optometric services are, overall, such a small benefit relative to other benefits provided to consumers that it is hard to believe that it would have more than very small or minimal impact on any rate.

I hope this answers your questions.

Thank you.

Lori K. Wing-Heier, CIC, CRM

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Senator Kelly challenged the ophthalmologists to prove to him that the language in the bill allows invasive surgery and to prove to him where injections into the eye are allowed in SB 55.