

February 19, 2015

Senator Cathy Giessel:

I am your constituent asking you to please support SB 55.

SB 55 updates the Alaska Optometry statutes in several areas, making it similar to the dental and nurse practitioner statutes, whereas the board determines the regulatory details of practice. This allows more flexibility as technology advances.

It places the details of the continuing education requirements back into regulation where they belong, as the Department indicated they desired many years ago when I was on the Optometry Board. Current regulations already require 36 hours per license period, and the deleted hours shown are redundant and require unnecessary work for Occupational Licensing to track.

SB 55 leaves the details of the current pharmaceutical prescribing authority up to the board through regulation, as with the other prescribing professions. But the bill does clearly prohibit injections into the vitreous body of the eye, which is done by specialty ophthalmologists. Alaska optometrists currently prescribe scheduled drugs including schedule 2 hydrocodone as approved last legislative session.

SB 55 re-writes the optometry definition which is currently over 40 years old. Optometrists are trained and currently perform far more advanced procedures than many years ago, such as diagnostic imaging, laser imaging, and prescribing pharmaceuticals. This new definition clearly defines modern optometry, and allows the board the flexibility to assure protection of the public. There is also a section on limitations on practice which excludes any invasive surgery, and a section clearly defining all the excluded surgery reserved for ophthalmology, including laser PRK, even though many optometrists can perform this in a few other states, it is still prohibited in SB 55.

Sincerely,

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