



March 9, 2016

To: Senate Labor and Commerce Committee Members  
Re: Tanana Chiefs Conference Support of Senate Bill 55 (SB 55)

Senator Mia Costello, Chair, Senate Labor and Commerce Committee and Committee members,

This important bill would allow the Alaska Board of Optometry to change regulations in the optometry statutes without requiring legislative approval. With changes in technology and training, the statutes governing optometric practice become outdated and changing them currently requires a legislative act. The bill would remove politics from the process and allow the Board to act independently, in parity with other professional boards such as physicians, nurse practitioners and dentists. Tanana Chiefs Conference supports this legislation as the ultimate outcome will be better care for patients.

Alaska citizens should have the best access to affordable eye care. Optometrists provide the vast majority of eye care throughout Alaska, including remote towns and villages. Costs are reduced when most eye care can be provided locally by family eye doctors instead of traveling to see expensive specialists. When needed, optometrists work closely with ophthalmologists referring patients for specialty care and surgery, just as family doctors and nurse practitioners refer to specialists when needed. That important step would not be affected by SB 55. Instead, SB55 insures that **all Alaskans** will have continued access to the latest in quality Optometric eye care, services and technology.

With the passage of SB55, the Alaska State Board of examiners in Optometry would continue to protect the interests of the public through continued monitoring of licensure requirements including training, testing and certification.

Sincerely,  
Tanana Chiefs Conference

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victor Joseph".

Victor Joseph,  
TCC President and CEO