



March 5, 2015

Senator Cathy Giessel  
716 W. 4<sup>th</sup> Ave., Ste. 511  
Anchorage, AK 99501

Dear Senator Giessel:

This letter is intended to request your support for SB 55 and to explain why it is a positive change, as well as negate potential reservations for the bill.

SB 55 allows for the regulation of licensing and continuing education requirements to be policed by the Optometric board. This makes intuitive sense since we understand our profession well and will have a better grasp on how to adapt - just as all medical professions have to do - with time and advancements. SB 55 will favorably impact the citizens of Alaska by allowing for timely and quality advancements of regulations, while simultaneously lessening the burden for Occupational Licensing.

The profession of Optometry has changed drastically over the last several decades, as I dare say most medical professions have. The current legislation is grossly outdated and SB 55 defines modern optometry. Not only are we experts in optics, but we receive extensive training with respect to systemic and ocular health. We are trained to diagnose and manage ocular diseases with various imaging equipment and lasers, prescribe pharmaceuticals, and perform minor procedures. Despite the fact that we have this training, my colleagues and I are currently not allowed to use it to its full capacity. This is a travesty and certainly not beneficial to the Alaskan public. SB 55 provides a safeguard by requiring specific qualifications for any procedures performed and it clearly defines limitations of practice. I am not a surgeon, nor do I want to be, and desiring to use the education I earned to be the best clinician I can be seems perfectly logical and reasonable.

As our profession evolves, so do other aspects of medicine, such as pharmaceuticals. These evolutions have historically required legislature for statute changes. SB 55 allows the details of the current pharmaceutical prescribing authority to be regulated by the board, which will likely be more effective, as seen with other prescribing professions.

In summary, SB 55 will increase efficiency and effectiveness of regulating optometric physicians in the state of Alaska. It also accurately defines the profession and our scope of practice.

Thank you for listening, and on behalf of my fellow colleagues and myself, I appreciate your consideration of SB 55.

Very respectfully,

Kara Reynolds, OD  
Vice President, Alaska Optometric Association