

3/7/2016

The Honorable Mia Costello
Chair, Senate Labor and Commerce Committee
Alaska Senate

Dear Chairwoman Costello,

I am writing to request that you and your fellow committee members support SB55. This bill updates and modernizes the Alaska Optometry Statute.

As an independent, honorable healthcare profession that provides the majority of eye care to the Alaskan public the state optometric board is best qualified to regulate the profession for the safety of the public. Currently Alaska Optometry Law (08.72.240) states that licensees must "keep informed of or use current professional theories or practices". The statutes for the boards of dentistry, medicine, and nursing set the details of practice in regulation allowing flexibility with changes in modern technology and education as they occur. SB 55 doesn't authorize optometrists to do procedures. It does give the state board authority to regulate the profession for the safety of the public as other professional boards do.

In addition, it will give Alaska citizens the best access to affordable eye care with over 150 optometrists providing the majority of care (only 20 ophthalmologists) in all settings, from urban Anchorage to Alaskan villages.

As a profession we have some of the lowest malpractice insurance rates in healthcare. This speaks to the good clinical and professional judgement that our profession has exercised for decades. When specialty eye care and surgery is required we will not hesitate use that judgement just as general ophthalmology, family practice and nurse practitioners do.

Sincerely,

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March 7, 2016

Subject: Support of SB55

I am a lifelong Alaskan. I have been in private practice here in Anchorage since 1982. I am asking your support of SB55.

SB55 does not authorize optometrists to do any procedures--it only gives the state board authority to regulate the profession for the safety of the public.

The state board would never authorize optometrists to do anything beyond their scope of education and training, as is clearly stated in SB55.

On every legislation for over the past 40 years, organized ophthalmology has claimed "terrible harm by optometrists" yet history proves this has NEVER been true

Once again, thank you for your support of SB55.

Steve Dobson, O.D.