

Thank you committee members,

My name is Paul Barney, I am an optometrist and the current chair of the Alaska Board of Examiners in Optometry. I am also a past president of the Alaska Optometric Association. I'm here today in support of ~~HB-103~~ (SB-36).

I have practiced in Anchorage for 17 years where I am the Center Director of Pacific Cataract and Laser Institute in Anchorage. Pacific Cataract and Laser Institute (also known as PCLI) is a referral center limited to medical and surgical eye care. I practice with an Ophthalmic Surgeon and a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist. PCLI's approach to eye care is to work collaboratively as a team and optimize each practitioner's education and skills. Together we are able to provide quality, ~~more~~ affordable, surgical eye care to Alaskans. We in fact are the largest provider of cataract care in the state of Alaska.

I support ~~HB-103~~ (SB-36) because it will allow the Board of Optometry to regulate the details of the practice of Optometry. This is already the case with Advanced Practice Nurses, Dentists, and Medical Doctors. This legislation will not set a new precedence in health care, since this is already the way other health care providers are regulated in the state of Alaska.

~~HB-103~~ (SB-36) will give Optometrists a better opportunity to practice to the highest level of their education by allowing the Board of Optometry to write regulations that are commensurate with educational advances that occur with new technology and medications. The current Optometry statute was written over 40 years ago and requires Optometry to pursue a statute change whenever there are

advances in education and technology. As you know, statute changes are costly and time consuming.

Like all other professional regulatory boards, the Board of Optometry cannot promulgate regulations for practices or procedures that are beyond the education of Optometrists. The Board of Optometry is overseen by the AK Department of Law, just like other health care boards. And the AK Department of Law would ensure that the Board of Optometry's regulations were within the scope of Optometric education.

Other safeguards are our medical legal system and insurance system. Any healthcare provider who provides care outside of their education is subject to disciplinary action by their respective board, as well as serious medical legal ramifications. Additionally, insurance carriers do not pay providers for care they provide outside of their scope of education. With that said, there is no incentive for any healthcare provider to provide care outside of their education, and, there are very serious consequences, both financially and to their licensure, to practitioners who do provide care outside of their education.

As chair of the Alaska Board of Optometry, I can assure you that the primary concern of the Board is the safety of the public. In the six years that I have served on the Board we have had no complaints from the public that were serious enough to even consider disciplinary action. Optometrists are conservative and cautious practitioners and the passage of ~~HB 103~~ (SB 36) would not change their conservative nature.

~~HB 103~~ (SB 36) would be good for the state of Alaska. The bill puts the regulatory details regarding the practice of Optometry in the authority of the Alaska Board of Optometry. These changes are important to

allow the profession and practice of Optometry to incorporate new technologies and advances in eye care as they occur. Optometry provides over 70% of the eye care in the U.S. In some rural areas, especially in Alaska, Optometrists are the only eye care provider in the community. The citizens of Alaska deserve to be served by a profession that is allowed to stay current with advances in education and new technologies in eye care.

I respectfully urge you to support ~~HB-103~~ (SB 36).

Paul M. Barney, O.D.

Chairman, Alaska Board of Examiners in Optometry