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March 6, 2024

Representative Justin Ruffridge
Vice-Chair House Health and Social Services
State Capitol Room 104
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Ruffridge,

The Alaska Optometric Association strongly supports House Bill 309, which grants the Alaska Board of Optometry the authority to draft regulation regarding the delegation of routine optometric services.

For decades, optometric practice has effectively utilized technicians and assistants to perform basic pre-testing, screening evaluations, initial patient histories, as well as technical components of ancillary tests. This is universally done throughout Alaska and all other states and is also the standard for virtually all healthcare professionals.

Other healthcare professions in Alaska have resolved this issue by incorporating delegation authority into statute including Medicine, Osteopathy, Podiatry, Physician Assistants (08.64.106), Dentistry (08.36.346), Veterinary Medicine (08.98.050 (9,B)), Pharmacy(08.80.030,(9)), and Chiropractic (08.20.168).

Technicians and assistants allow for far greater clinic efficiency and optimal utilization of the doctor's time and thus greatly improves patient access to care. This legislation will have no associated cost to insurers or patients and the use of technicians and assistants mitigates costs for the patients and their insurers.

It was only through a recent research opinion by the Department of Law regarding a telemedicine project that it was determined the Optometry Statute lacked sufficient language to grant the Board the authority to regulate task delegation.

This simple, thoughtful, and noncontroversial legislation will allow the Board of Examiners in Optometry to regulate delegation of routine optometric service to assure continued delivery of care for the residents in the most cost-effective and patient centric manner.

Sincerely,

Laura Kompkoff, O.D., President, Alaska Optometric Association

Damien R. Delzer, O.D., DiplABO/President-elect, Alaska Optometric Association