

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES
STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 22, 2004

4:57 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Peggy Wilson, Chair
Representative John Coghill
Representative Paul Seaton
Representative Mary Kapsner

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Carl Gatto, Vice Chair
Representative Kelly Wolf
Representative Sharon Cissna

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 502

"An Act relating to dispensing opticians and dispensing optician apprentices."

- HEARD AND HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 274

"An Act relating to the housing assistance loan fund in the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation; creating the housing assistance loan program; repealing loans for teacher housing and providing for loans for multi-family housing; making conforming amendments; and providing for an effective date."

- SCHEDULED BUT NOT HEARD

HOUSE BILL NO. 186

"An Act establishing the Radiologic Technology Board of Examiners; requiring licensure of occupations relating to radiologic technology, radiation therapy, and nuclear medicine technology; and providing for an effective date."

- SCHEDULED BUT NOT HEARD

HOUSE BILL NO. 239

"An Act directing the Department of Public Safety to establish an Internet-based identification and tracking system relating to

controlled substances that are prescribed for human use; and relating to the manner in which prescriptions for controlled substances may be filled by a pharmacist."

- SCHEDULED BUT NOT HEARD

HOUSE BILL NO. 72

"An Act relating to the qualifications and appointment of members of the Board of Regents of the University of Alaska; and providing for an effective date."

- SCHEDULED BUT NOT HEARD

HOUSE BILL NO. 535

"An Act relating to liability for expenses of placement in certain mental health facilities; relating to the mental health treatment assistance program; and providing for an effective date."

- SCHEDULED BUT NOT HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 502

SHORT TITLE: DISPENSING OPTICIANS: BOARD & REGULATION

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) HOLM

02/16/04	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/16/04	(H)	L&C, HES
03/31/04	(H)	L&C AT 3:15 PM CAPITOL 17
03/31/04	(H)	Heard & Held
03/31/04	(H)	MINUTE(L&C)
04/02/04	(H)	L&C AT 3:15 PM CAPITOL 17
04/02/04	(H)	Moved Out of Committee
04/02/04	(H)	MINUTE(L&C)
04/05/04	(H)	L&C RPT 2DP 4NR
04/05/04	(H)	DP: GATTO, GUTTENBERG; NR: CRAWFORD,
04/05/04	(H)	LYNN, DAHLSTROM, ANDERSON
04/06/04	(H)	HES AT 3:00 PM CAPITOL 106
04/06/04	(H)	Scheduled But Not Heard
04/22/04	(H)	HES AT 2:00 PM CAPITOL 106

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE JIM HOLM
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As sponsor of HB 502, introduced Ms. Christi BRAND.

CHRISTI BRAND, President
Opticians Association of Alaska
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on HB 502.

ACTION NARRATIVE

TAPE 04-36, SIDE A

Number 0001

CHAIR PEGGY WILSON called the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee meeting to order at 4:57 p.m. Representatives Wilson, Coghill, Seaton, and Kapsner were present at the call to order.

HB 502-DISPENSING OPTICIANS: BOARD & REGULATION

Number 0026

CHAIR WILSON announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 502, "An Act relating to dispensing opticians and dispensing optician apprentices."

Number 0065

REPRESENTATIVE JIM HOLM, Alaska State Legislature, sponsor of HB 502, introduced Ms. Christi Brand. He thanked the members for meeting to take Ms. Brand's testimony since she will only be in town a few more hours. Ms. Brand is the President of the Opticians Association of Alaska.

Number 0113

CHRISTI BRAND, President, Opticians Association of Alaska, testified on HB 502. She read the following testimony into the record [original punctuation provided]:

Madam Chairman, committee members my name is Christi Brand I am a licensed optician with 18 years of experience in the optical field. I am certified by the American Board of Opticianry and the National Contact Lens Examiners. I am the owner of Golden North Optics in Fairbanks and I am president of the

Opticians Association of Alaska, thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony today.

As Licensed Opticians we are part of the healthcare industry, we are like a pharmacist to the eye Doctor. We are licensed to interpret the Eye Doctors prescription, we make recommendations on lenses, materials and frames based on each patient's needs, we take precise measurements that are critical to proper sight and we make the glasses or fit the contacts that help the patient see. We are trained in anatomy, physiology, and ocular complications. We receive continuing education every year and we are licensed providers who can contract with insurance companies to file a patients insurance.

From 1973 until 2001 the required hours for apprenticeship training to become a licensed optician was 6000 hours. In 2001 SB270 was passed late in session under the 24-hour rule and the amount of hours was reduced to 1800. 1800 hours is not enough training to learn the complexity of our field, at 1800 hours we would be one of if not the lowest state in the union in terms of training. HB502 rectifies this problem by increasing the number of required hours, not back to the 6000 hours, which had worked well for nearly 30 years but to 4000 hours for spectacle training with an additional 2000 hours for those who wish to become licensed in contact lenses as well.

HB 502 would also adopt the United States Department of Labor's apprenticeship program, which provides a formal educational component to the training where the apprentice and the mentor will have the Career Progression Program from the National Academy of Opticianry to follow step by step through the training process.

The U.S. Department of Labor's apprenticeship program has a school to work linkage program for high school seniors, to help them bridge the gap from high school to work, and upon completion of the apprenticeship program a certificate of completion will be issued which can be taken to the State of Alaska for licensing. The University of Alaska will also give credit for each portion of the license towards an Associates Degree in Applied Optics. The

apprenticeship program also has federal grants available to businesses for hiring the unemployed and training them, and these grants will help offset the cost of the apprentice's wages while offering the disadvantaged a chance to learn a noble profession.

The changes that HB 502 accomplishes for the opticians of Alaska are important in that it sets out a higher standard of training and it adopts the U.S. Dept. of Labor as the official apprenticeship program. We believe that Alaska's consumers deserve the best when it comes to their eye care and we think you will agree. Please pass HB 502. Thank You!

Number 0350

CHAIR WILSON asked Ms. Brand if she would be available to be on-line when HB 502 is heard again.

MS. BRAND responded that she would be available.

[While no announcement was made, HB 502 was held in committee.]

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 5:02 p.m.