

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

February 22, 2024

3:03 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Mike Prax, Chair  
Representative Justin Ruffridge, Vice Chair  
Representative CJ McCormick  
Representative Dan Saddler  
Representative Zack Fields  
Representative Genevieve Mina

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Jesse Sumner

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

Board of Examiners of Optometry

Ethan Arndt - Wasilla

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

ETHAN ARNDT, OD, Appointee  
Board of Examiners of Optometry  
Wasilla, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the Board of Examiners of Optometry.

CARL SEUTTER, representing self  
Wasilla, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of the appointment of Ethan Arndt to the Board of Examiners of Optometry.

DAWN HARMS, OD, representing self  
Eagle River, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of the appointment of Ethan Arndt to the Board of Examiners of Optometry.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[3:03:18 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX called the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:03 p.m. Representatives McCormick, Mina, Sadler, and Prax were present at the call to order. Representatives Fields and Ruffridge arrived as the meeting was in progress.

**CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):**  
**Board of Examiners of Optometry**

[3:04:31 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX announced that the only order of business would be consideration of the governor's appointee to the Board of Examiners of Optometry.

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The committee took an at-ease from 3:05:06 to 3:05:31 p.m.

[3:05:31 PM](#)

ETHAN ARNDT, OD, Appointee, Board of Examiners of Optometry, provided his background and resume related to his position as a specialist in optometry. He explained that his certification included a specialty in ocular disease. He has provided eye care in many parts of Alaska including remote areas, and he has been involved in different types of optometry practices including hospitals and clinical practices. He noted that as a member of the Board of Examiners, his range of knowledge would enable him to emphasize the highest standard of care. He has already stepped into the position for several months, and he would like to continue to do so.

[3:08:14 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX opened public testimony on the confirmation hearing for the governor's appointee to the Board of Examiners of Optometry.

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CARL SEUTTER, representing self, Wasilla, Alaska, testified in support of the appointment of Ethan Arndt to the Board of Examiners of Optometry. He explained that he has worked with Dr. Arndt for the past five years and finds that his work is impeccable. His concern for patient care and optometry is of the highest standard.

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DAWN HARMS, OD, representing self, testified in support of the appointment of Ethan Arndt to the Board of Examiners of Optometry. She has been a friend and colleague for 11 years and finds Dr. Arndt to be an intelligent, kind, and compassionate optometrist. He would be a valuable asset to Alaska's Board of Optometry.

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER questioned Dr. Arndt about the differences between practicing optometry in a health care facility and in a private practice.

DR. ARNDT said he sees collaboration as being the greatest difference between working in a private practice and practicing in a health care facility. Private practice is more challenging in terms of getting related or emergency care for patients.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked what Dr. Arndt sees as the greatest challenge facing the profession of optometry in Alaska.

DR. ARNDT explained that the greatest challenge of working in Alaska is access to specialty care. Some issues he has encountered related to access are the need for patients to travel and affordability of care.

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CHAIR PRAX closed public testimony on the confirmation hearing.

CHAIR PRAX announced that the House Health and Social Services Committee has reviewed the qualifications of the governor's appointees and recommends that the following names be forwarded to a joint session for consideration: Ethan Arndt, OD, Board of Examiners of Optometry. He said signing the report regarding boards and commissions in no way reflects an individual member's approval or disapproval of the appointee; the nomination is

merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

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CHAIR PRAX announced that the hearings for HB 275, HB 264, and HB 196 would be postponed to 02/24/24.

[3:14:11 PM](#)

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 3:14 p.m.