

HB

336

APR 8 1992

Boley - bill file

KENNETH T. RICHARDSON, M.D., F.A.C.S.
OPHTHALMOLOGY AND OPHTHALMIC SURGERY

April 3, 1992

*plus share w/ Adams -
Senate version is his.*

The Honorable Drue Pearce
House of Representatives
State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Dear Ms. Pearce:

I oppose House Bill 336.

Maintaining a Consistent Standard of Health Care.

I'm certain you have heard arguments pro and con as to the qualification of optometrists to prescribe drugs. I'll not address this issue. However, should the legislature decide to pass this bill it is their responsibility to include in the bill a statement that *optometrists will be held to the same standards of care as ophthalmologists and other physicians.* To fail to do so is playing politics with health care and will set a dangerous precedent for the future.

The Importance of Cost Containment in Health Care.

The increased health care costs that will result from creating more physicians by legislation is important to consider. This is of particular relevance now, as health care costs threaten the budgets of Country and State, and as most legislative bodies are searching for ways to contain these costs.

This bill adds to the cost of health care in Alaska without improving health care.

That increasing doctors increases both testing and treatment is accepted and understood. Health care is not responsive to usual market dynamics, the reasons for which have been written about extensively.

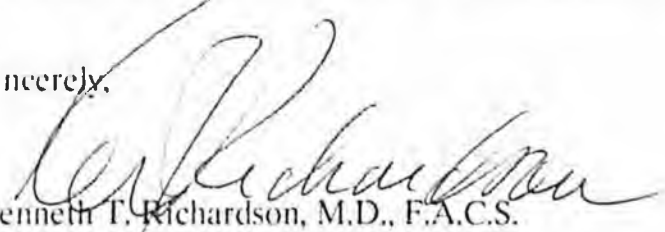
Tripling the number of eye care practitioners prescribing drugs is predictably very costly.

The cost for Glaucoma, within Alaska, can be expected to increase by \$400,000 yearly, if the number of treating practitioners increases threefold. This is just one common eye disease.

Since the number of eyedocs (Optometrists/Ophthalmologists) will not be increased by this bill, just the number of treaters, it isn't that more glaucoma cases will be discovered and thereby more vision saved. The more likely consequence is obvious.

Perhaps it's fortunate that all of us, including legislators, must begin to look at health care in all of its aspects. It is a complicated area from its reality to its politics.

Sincerely,


Kenneth T. Richardson, M.D., F.A.C.S.