

February 15, 2024

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Beth Coleman
Executive Director, MOA

RE: MN State Board of Optometry's Support of circulating bills, HF 1031 and HF 1033, and opposition to HF 3602

Dear Ms. Coleman:

As the oldest Optometry Board ("Board") in the nation, our mission statement is *"to protect the public through effective licensure and enforcement of the statutes and rules governing optometry practice to reasonably ensure a standard of competent and ethical practice."* We have a 123-year history of serving and providing the citizens of the State of Minnesota with safe and effective eye care.

Public service is our priority. It is becoming increasingly apparent that Minnesota's Optometric Practice Act is antiquated and needs revision. Minnesota is lagging behind other states and needs to catch up in its ability to deliver timely, quality care to Minnesotans. Slightly expanding our scope of practice—to fall more closely in line with neighboring states—will help attract new graduates to our state, ensuring better access to care throughout the state.

We write today in support of HF 1031 and HF 1033. We support these bills to modernize the optometric statutes for the following reasons:

- Increase timely access to quality care;
- Attract optometrists to practice in our state;
 - Balance supply and demand of practicing optometrists;
 - Meet increasing patient demand;
 - Control costs;
- Benefit patients from the latest medications and technology; and
- More fully utilize optometrist education training.

It is troublesome that the opposition to these bills comes from a small delegation of individuals who do not accurately represent the professions at large or consider the patients a priority. Additionally, these individuals have introduced legislation—HF 3602—that potentially sets back the current ability of optometrists to serve the public. We oppose HF 3602. The proposed language in HF 3602 serves to stymie HF 1031 and HF 1033 and restrict optometrists' ability to practice in Minnesota even further than the current landscape.

The Board is concerned about the impasse at the State Capitol and wants to see professional dialogue and movement for the benefit of the patients we serve. The Board believes that the public would be best served by supporting HF 1031 and HF 1033, which address the current and rapidly changing eye care landscape, modernize the scope of optometry practice, and keep pace with the rest of the country.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Eric Bailey, Chair

Dr. Sam Villella, Vice Chair

Dr. Tina McCarty, Secretary

Fernando Alvarado, Public Member

Dr. Leah Colby

Dr. Georgiann Jensen-Bohn