

March 12, 2025

TO: HOUSE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

FROM: DEREK BRYANT

RE: HB 2223

My name is Derek Bryant, I'm a Native Kansan from Winfield, Kansas, and I'm currently attending the Oklahoma College of Optometry. I also serve as the President for the American Optometric Student Association where I represent over 7,000 optometry students across the nation. I'm here today to ask you to vote yes for House Bill 2223. This bill will modernize the scope of practice for optometry in Kansas to include procedures that I am trained to do in school, that I provide to real, live patients while in school, and that I will be able to do independently in surrounding states like Oklahoma and Colorado.

When I graduate in a few months, I hope to be able to return to Kansas and practice to the highest level that I am trained to. I would also like to provide my patients with the highest level of care that I am trained to provide. This is a sentiment that is shared by many native Kansans pursuing optometry.

We surveyed native Kansan optometry students across the nation and this is what we found: About half of the students we surveyed are interested in going to a rural area. 90% of students say that scope of practice is a significant factor when it comes to deciding whether they will return to Kansas or not. 96% said they would be more likely to return to Kansas if scope was modernized as outlined in House Bill 2223 was passed. And 61% said that if scope modernization wasn't passed, they would be less likely to return to Kansas to practice.

Now myself, living in Winfield, Kansas since I was born, I would like to return home and serve my fellow Kansans. However, as of right now, I can provide my patients a higher level of care

and practice to the highest level of my training by driving just 25 minutes south into Oklahoma. I hope what you see in this is that, for young Kansans entering optometry, House Bill 2223 is a big deal when it comes to deciding whether or not to return to Kansas to practice. This bill isn't a matter of allowing optometrists to do anything new or anything we aren't trained to do properly. It is simply a matter of deregulation that allows us to do what we are already trained to do in school. It's also about preventing Kansans from crossing state lines, driving hours out of their way, or even delaying treatment that can be provided by a highly trained optometrist in their hometown. Our only barrier to this issue isn't our education; it's the current scope of practice for optometry in Kansas.

I would appreciate your support for House Bill 2223 and encourage you to pass it out favorably. Thank you for your attention and for your time today, and God bless.

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