

Testimony of the Kansas Society of Eye Physicians & Surgeons  
Mary Champion, MD – President  
HB 2223 – In Opposition  
House Committee on Health and Human Services  
March 12, 2025

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, my name is Mary Champion, MD. I am a physician ophthalmologist and appear today as the President of the Kansas Society of Eye Physicians & Surgeons and the ophthalmologists who practice throughout the State of Kansas.

The Kansas State Legislature and those who regulate licensed professions assure that the individuals providing health care services are properly qualified. This is critical when considering the procedures in this bill. The anatomy of the eyelid and eyeball are very complex, and the structures are microscopic. The eyelid is only 2-3 mm thick, the thickness of cereal box cardboard; the target for a YAG laser is approximately 5% the thickness of a human hair. The margin for error is extremely small.

This bill removes from the optometry practice act a prohibition on surgery and injections. All surgery, lasers, and injections involve risk -- whether it is with a scalpel or a powerful laser that burns or cuts parts of the eyelid or eyeball. It is concerning when anyone minimizes potential cancers as “lumps and bumps” which, if improperly cut, can spread cancer throughout the body or disfigure a face. This bill permits removal of skin lesions “without a known malignancy” – but you cannot tell by just looking if any lesion has cancer cells in it.

There is not an “access” problem for Kansans to reach a qualified ophthalmologist for any of the procedures in this bill. 97% of Kansas residents are within an hour’s drive of an ophthalmologist and 92% are as close or closer to an ophthalmologist than to a Walmart. There is no reason to lower the standards of care in Kansas.

There is no evidence that recruiting optometrists to Kansas is problematic with the current scope of practice – the same scope as a majority of states. Kansas has the third highest number of optometrists per capita, higher than all the states where laser or lid surgery is allowed.

As you will hear from Dr. Unruh, surgery requires medical school and residency training - not just lectures or practice on an inanimate object.

Patients often ask, “how many of these have you done?” or “how long have you been doing this?” They want to know that the person taking care of them knows what they’re doing.

Kansas deserves to have qualified surgeons performing eye surgery, lasers, and procedures on them. On behalf of the patients we serve, and the eye physicians and surgeons of Kansas, we ask that you retain the current provisions in the optometry scope of practice and oppose House Bill 2223.