

Re: Testimony in support of HB 2223
Written testimony only
Blake Benson



PITTSBURG AREA
Chamber of Commerce

January 26, 2026

The Honorable Beverly Gossage, Chair
Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
Room: 445-S
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka KS 66612

Dear Chair Gossage and members of the Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare:

On behalf of the Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce and our 500+ member businesses, representing over 10,000 employees throughout Southeast Kansas, please allow me to voice our support for HB 2223. This bill would allow our Pittsburg area optometrists to practice a number of procedures for which they are trained, but not allowed to practice under current Kansas law even though these procedures are allowed in neighboring states like Oklahoma.

This bill would not only help our local optometrists remain competitive with their counterparts in other states, but would also ensure that Kansas residents can receive care at home with their trusted doctors.

I appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony in support of HB 2223, as it will be important to our state's residents and optometrists. Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Blake Benson
President, Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce

January 28, 2026

ATTN: Chairwoman Beverly Gossage
Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

My name is Dr. Dawn Bircher and I currently serve as the president of the Kansas State Board of Examiners in Optometry (KSSBEO). The mission of the KSSBEO is to regulate, administer, and enforce the provisions of Kansas Optometry Law to make sure that the highest quality of eye care is provided to the citizens of Kansas. We believe that by vigorous enforcement of the law, we protect the public to ensure that the highest quality of comprehensive eye care is available to the citizens of Kansas and that it is delivered by qualified optometric practitioners.

Our role is to ensure compliance with the optometry law and as such, the Board is neutral on this bill. However, the procedures outlined in the bill are part of contemporary education and training. Knowledge related to these procedures is part of the rigorous national board examination. All optometrists must successfully pass all three parts in order to apply for licensure in Kansas.

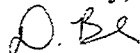
If House Bill 2223 passes, the KSSBEO will take the necessary measures to ensure that Kansas optometrists, in pursuit of performing these procedures, will have the necessary training and certification to provide care safely for Kansas patients. This was accomplished when oral prescription medications and the treatment of glaucoma was introduced into legislation. The credentialing process can be done within existing resources; however, if needed, the bill does allow us to set fees to cover any unforeseen expenses.

HB 2223 also includes a few minor changes requested by the KSSBEO, including providing electronic means of providing lists of Kansas licenses, as well as allowing flexibility in where the KSSBEO could hold the licensing exam.

If you have questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me at dawn.bircher@ks.gov.

Thank you for your service to Kansas.

Sincerely,



Dawn Bircher, OD
Board President

Dawn Bircher, OD, President • Sheena Nagaraja, OD, Vice-President • Gary Beaver, OD, Secretary-Treasurer •
Philip Walters, OD, Member at Large • Seth Katz, Public Member
Callie McAtee, MS, Executive Officer

January 27, 2026

TO: SENATE PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE COMMITTEE

FROM: DEREK BRYANT, OD

RE: HB 2223

My name is Derek Bryant, I'm a Native Kansan from Winfield, Kansas, and as of May 2025 I'm a graduate of the Oklahoma College of Optometry and a licensed optometrist practicing in Kansas. Last year, I served as the President for the American Optometric Student Association, where I represented 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 was trained to do in school, that I provided to real, live patients while in school, and that I am able to do independently in surrounding states like Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Colorado.

As a recent graduate, I made the decision to return to Kansas because it's where my family is and where I feel at home. Unfortunately, crossing the state line back into Kansas, I am no longer able practice to the highest level that I am trained. I would 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 and is a real barrier to getting students like myself to return to Kansas. I made the decision to return, but it wasn't easy, and I've given up a lot in the way of career to live and practice near my family in my home state.

When I was in school, 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.

I was born and raised in Winfield, and I now practice in Wichita and Mulvane. 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 of my hometown 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.

Contact Information:

Phone: 620-222-4906

Email: dirkbryant14@gmail.com

Current Address: 409 W Euclid, McPherson, KS 67460

January 23, 2026

Sen. Beverly Gossage, Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
300 SW 10th St
Topeka, KS 66612

Re: Support for House Bill 2223

Dear Chairwoman Gossage,

I am writing to express support for Kansas House Bill 2223.

The laser and eyelid procedures in HB 2223 are being appropriately performed by optometrists in several surrounding states. By allowing Kansas optometrists to provide these procedures, it would offer options for care in both rural and underserved areas.

It is important that Kansans have access to proper eyecare and a choice where to obtain their eye care.

Thank you for considering my request to support HB 2223.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rod Deeken". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Rod Deeken
17443 78th St
McLouth, KS 66054
(785) 691-5503

ANDREW M. DELANEY
404 WOODBURY LANE
HIAWATHA, KANSAS 66434

PHONE NUMBER (785) 742-7600
FACSIMILE (785) 742-7800
E-MAIL: delaneylaw@rainbowtel.net

January 21, 2026

Sen. Beverly Gossage, Chairperson
Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Re: Letter in Support of House Bill 2223

Senator Gossage:

Please accept this letter as my support for House Bill 2223, which would expand the scope of practice for optometrists in the State of Kansas, and feel free to disseminate the same to the members of your committee.

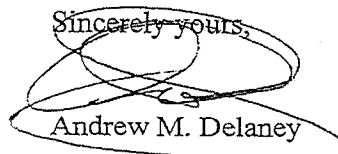
By way of a brief background, I am a fourth-generation Kansan and small business owner who has held a residence in the City of Hiawatha since birth. My parents have resided in the State of Kansas for over 80 years. Both my parents and I visit the same optometrist, Dr. Eric McPeak of Hiawatha, and have done so since he opened his office in Hiawatha. We have come to know Dr. McPeak, are familiar with his abilities, and have the utmost trust in his expertise.

Last year, my father underwent a procedure called YAG Capsulotomy. Unfortunately, this procedure cannot be performed by a local optometrist, even though our local optometrist is educated and trained to perform the procedure. My family had to travel out of state to the closest provider to obtain the procedure for my father. The follow-up appointments were also out of state. Traveling to appointments required either my brother or I to take time away from work to drive my parents into another state.

With the passage of House Bill 2223, people such as my parents would be able to obtain a YAG Capsulotomy or similar procedures from their local optometrist, whom they know and in whom they trust. Follow-up care would be readily accessible without the need to schedule half a day for travel. We all benefit from saving those hours of productivity lost to travel and waiting rooms. There is no need for the burden of all the travel and accompanying anxiety when procedure can be done just down the street by a skilled provider.

For these reasons, I would encourage your committee to pass House Bill 2223. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely yours,



Andrew M. Delaney

January 22, 2026
Sen. Beverly Gossage, Chairperson
Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka, KS 66612

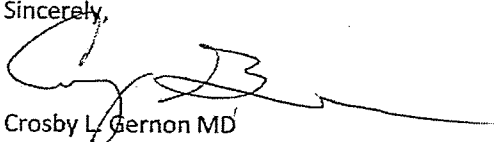
Re: Letter in Support of HB 2223

Dear Senator Gossage,

I write in support of HB 2223 which would allow a reasonable scope of practice expansion for optometrists in Kansas in accordance with multiple other states. I am a radiologist practicing in Hiawatha and Atchison. I was a past associate professor at the University of Kansas Medical Center in Kansas City. Among other procedures, HB 2223 would permit local optometrists to perform YAG capsulotomy. I required this procedure three years ago. Despite the fact that our local optometrist, Dr. Eric McPeak, diagnosed my condition and is trained in the procedure, I had to drive over two hours to south Kansas City for the procedure. The travel required me to procure care for my wife who is wheelchair bound.

I urge the committee to evaluate the safety record of other states that have enacted similar bills. Optometrists are dedicated professionals and desire the utmost well being for their patients. Dr. McPeak is a colleague and friend who has provided outstanding care for myself and my family. Please allow the merits of HB 2223 to be considered on the Senate floor. Feel free to disseminate this letter among the committee and I am more than willing to discuss my thoughts with any members who have questions.

Sincerely,



Crosby L. Gernon MD
108 1/2 South Seventh
Hiawatha, KS 66434
Cell: 785 741-0649

Re: Testimony in Support of HB 2223

Written Testimony Only

Wayne Gilmore, O.D.

January 28, 2026

Room 445-S
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Madam Chair Gossage and Members of the Committee,

Please accept this letter in support of House Bill 2223, which modernizes the scope of practice for Kansas optometrists—something that has not been updated in over 25 years. After completing my education, I returned home to Southeast Kansas to practice in Parsons, taking over from my partner's retiring father, who had served the community since 1958. In rural Kansas, we practice full-scope optometry and provide emergency eye care at Labette Health, where I have served on the Board of Trustees since 2013.

Rather than simply restating the merits of this bill, I highlight excerpts from past testimony on Kansas optometry scope expansions. These show how opposition arguments have remained unchanged for nearly five decades—despite being repeatedly disproven.

In 1987, during testimony in support of SB 113, which allowed optometrists to prescribe topical drugs, a Kansas optometrist noted:

“It is worth remembering that Kansas Ophthalmologists testified in 1977 that patients would be harmed with these drugs.”

Former KOA Executive Director Gary Robbins, in 1987 written testimony, recalled opposition to the 1977 bill permitting optometrists to use diagnostic drugs:

“At the time, ophthalmologists and the Kansas Medical Society opposed the legislation on three basic grounds: lack of education, dramatic increase in malpractice claims for optometrists, and a fear for public safety. ... These concerns have proved to be unfounded. The State Board of Examiners of Optometry has not received a single complaint involving the misuse of a diagnostic drug. ... The scenario facing you today is identical. We don't believe that requesting an update in our practice act every ten years is unrealistic. It is needed to reflect the changes in optometric education and training.”

Wayne Gilmore, O.D.

Eyecare Associates of Parsons

501 Main Street Parsons, KS 67357 • 620-421-2330 • wayne@eyecareparsons.com

The same is true for HB 2223. Every procedure Kansas optometrists seek to add has been performed safely in Oklahoma for nearly 30 years—directly refuting opposition claims, just as history has time and time again.

Opponent testimony will likely include individuals with both MD and OD degrees attempting to discredit optometric education. Optometrists are not seeking to become “junior ophthalmologists” but to modernize our scope to reflect current training.

In 1987, Dr. Frank Griffith, who held both MD and OD degrees, opposed SB 113, arguing:

“It is not in the best interest of our citizens to have potent medications prescribed by non-medical practitioners who will be unable to detect, diagnose, and treat their side effects. Do not allow political pressure to provide a short cut to education. This is an untried area and other states do not have a long enough track record to document the safety of allowing optometrists to treat eye disease. Do not let the citizens of Kansas have their eyesight placed at risk by an unproven practice of allowing non-medical practitioners to treat eye disease. ”

He also predicted:

“Any time a profession expands its scope of practice, their malpractice cost rises after a short grace period.”

However, real-world data contradicts these claims. Malpractice insurers assess risk without bias, using actuarial science. If optometrists were unqualified for these procedures, insurance rates would reflect it. Yet, today, Oklahoma optometrists—who have performed these procedures for three decades—pay the **same** malpractice rates as those in Kansas. Attached is a 2024 rate sheet from Lockton-Affinity, a major malpractice insurer, to confirm this statement.

History repeats itself. Opposition arguments remain the same, and each time, Kansas optometrists have proven them wrong—delivering safe, high-quality care to our patients. (Every quote in this letter is sourced from Kansas Legislative archives.)

Thank you for your time and for your service to our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wayne Gilmore', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Wayne Gilmore, O.D.

Lockton Optometry Rates \$1 million / \$3 million												
State	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2022	2023	2024
AK	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
AL	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
AR	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$519	\$519	\$519
AZ	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
CA	\$420	\$420	\$420	\$420	\$420	\$420	\$420	\$420	\$462	\$462	\$462	\$462
CO	\$580	\$580	\$580	\$580	\$580	\$580	\$580	\$580	\$638	\$734	\$734	\$734
CT	\$1,509	\$1,509	\$1,509	\$1,509	\$1,509	\$1,509	\$1,509	\$1,509	\$1,660	\$1,909	\$1,909	\$1,909
DC	\$1,509	\$1,509	\$1,509	\$1,509	\$1,509	\$1,509	\$1,509	\$1,509	\$1,660	\$1,909	\$1,909	\$1,909
DE	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
FL	\$710	\$710	\$710	\$710	\$710	\$710	\$710	\$710	\$781	\$898	\$898	\$898
GA	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$545	\$545	\$545
HI	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
IA	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
ID	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
IL	\$603	\$603	\$603	\$603	\$603	\$603	\$603	\$603	\$663	\$762	\$762	\$762
IN	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
KS	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
KY	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
LA	\$957	\$957	\$957	\$957	\$957	\$957	\$957	\$957	\$1,053	\$1,211	\$1,211	\$1,211
MA	\$603	\$603	\$603	\$603	\$603	\$603	\$603	\$603	\$663	\$762	\$762	\$762
MD	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
ME	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
MI	\$603	\$603	\$603	\$603	\$603	\$603	\$603	\$603	\$663	\$762	\$762	\$762
MN	\$580	\$580	\$580	\$580	\$580	\$580	\$580	\$580	\$638	\$734	\$734	\$734
MO	\$580	\$580	\$580	\$580	\$580	\$580	\$580	\$580	\$638	\$734	\$734	\$734
MS	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
MT	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
NC	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
ND	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
NE	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
NH	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
NJ	\$540	\$540	\$540	\$540	\$540	\$540	\$540	\$540	\$594	\$683	\$683	\$683
NM	\$420	\$420	\$420	\$420	\$420	\$420	\$420	\$420	\$462	\$531	\$531	\$531
NV	\$580	\$580	\$580	\$580	\$580	\$580	\$580	\$580	\$638	\$734	\$734	\$734
NY	\$420	\$420	\$420	\$420	\$420	\$420	\$420	\$420	\$462	\$531	\$531	\$531
OH	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
OK	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
OR	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
PA	\$540	\$540	\$540	\$540	\$540	\$540	\$540	\$540	\$594	\$683	\$683	\$683
RI	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
SC	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$525	\$525	\$525
SD	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
TN	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
TX	\$603	\$603	\$603	\$603	\$603	\$603	\$603	\$603	\$663	\$762	\$762	\$762
UT	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
VA	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
VT	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570
WA	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$451	\$496	\$570	\$570	\$570

The Honorable Beverly Gossage,
Chair Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
Room 445-S

Dear Chair Gossage and Members of the Committee,

I am Shelly Holle, a 63-year-old resident of Atwood, Kansas, writing to share my experience with eye care access in our state. I recently underwent a Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty (SLT) procedure to manage my eye pressure due to Glaucoma.

However, accessing this care required significant travel. I had to travel 2 hours and 15 minutes each way for evaluations and for the SLT procedure to be done. This trip had to be done 4 separate times, costing me a total of over 18 hours of travel time. This journey placed a burden not only on my time but also my energy and resources. I am a pastor serving 2 churches and want to keep doing my job for years to come.

My experience highlights the challenges many rural Kansans face in accessing timely eye care. Due to current regulations, patients often must travel long distances and wait extended periods for essential procedures that optometrists could otherwise perform. This delay can impact daily life, from living independently to driving safely.

I urge you to support legislative efforts, such as HB 2223, that would allow optometrists to perform specific laser and minor office procedures. By expanding access to care, we can ensure that Kansans receive timely treatment without unnecessary hardship.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your commitment to improving healthcare access in our state.

Sincerely,

Shelly Holle

Atwood, KS 67730



Senator Beverly Gossage, Chairwoman
Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th Avenue
Topeka, KS 66612

Subject: Support for HB2223

Dear Chairwoman Gossage,

I am writing this letter in strong support for HB2223 which gives the opportunity for Optometrists to expand their valuable services to the people of the State of Kansas.

Please know that I and my family over the years have depended a great deal on our eye healthcare from excellently qualified Optometrists. At my current age of 83, I have had, and still do have, complete confidence in their expertise.

Recently I required a procedure that could have been performed locally but because of current practice limitations I found it necessary to travel for both treatment and follow-up. This did cause unnecessary travel, time and unnecessary financial requirements.

Should HB2223 pass, many Kansas citizens would receive great relief and beneficial medical care.

Senator Gossage, I strongly encourage your committee to support HB2223. I am available at any time for you to contact me about this valuable medical addition for the people of Kansas

Thank you for your time. I greatly appreciate your service and efforts to improve the lives of Kansas citizens.

Respectfully,

Ernest F. Honas
17421 S Ingrid St.
Gardner, KS 66030
(785) 375-5697



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January 25, 2026

Chairwoman Gossage and Members of the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of House Bill 2223, which seeks to modernize the Optometry Scope of Practice in Kansas to reflect current education and training. This bill is important to me because it will have a significant impact on my patients and profession. I am an optometrist and the managing member of a group optometric practice with multiple locations in Southeast Kansas, including our main office in Pittsburg, Kansas. Along with providing optometric care to our region, we are providing on-call services for the two area hospitals covering Crawford and Bourbon Counties. We are also very engaged in clinical research, having participated in more than 200 clinical trials. My partners and I grew up in Kansas and attended optometry school at the University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL). Soon after graduating, I was able to return to Kansas and raise my family here.

HB 2223 will modernize the profession of optometry by allowing Doctors of Optometry in Kansas to perform procedures that they have been educated, trained and certified to do. Specifically, HB 2223 allows optometrists to provide in-office procedures including removing lid lesions such as cysts, styes and skin tags and to use injectable medications (excluding intraocular). The bill will also allow us to perform three specific laser procedures: laser capsulotomy (YAG), laser trabeculoplasty, and laser peripheral iridotomy (PI). These procedures should be utilized in primary eye care offices. In addition, HB 2223 excludes an extensive list of procedures that are not currently included in contemporary optometric education and training.

This bill is needed because, in my experience, there is an access issue with ophthalmology for patients, including long wait times for appointments, multiple trips to offices an hour or more away for many, and days of work missed by caregivers taking their family members to appointments. With the number of ophthalmologists practicing in Kansas declining, at the same time the population is aging and experiencing a higher incidence of eye health issues, we are concerned about challenges accessing care in the future. And while this would seem to be mostly affecting rural patients, there are challenges in our urban areas as well, as is indicated by the fact that glaucoma specialists who see patients in Wichita come in from Kansas City and even out of state. Without an increase in access to the types of procedures included in this bill, patients may struggle to find timely care in the near future. And speaking of workforce, it is becoming increasingly challenging to recruit newly graduated optometrists to Kansas when our doctors can't practice to the level of their education and training, but other nearby states allow them to do so.

The training and ability of optometrists to provide these procedures is a key component of this bill. As an optometrist, I spent four years in optometry school after completing an undergraduate degree at Pittsburg State University. (Some optometrists complete an additional year of residency.) This included 10,000 hours of education and more than 2,000 proctored patient encounters. While all of today's optometry students are trained to perform the procedures included in HB223, I received my training while in clinical practice. It is important to note that I became certified on these procedures in a continuing education course after graduation, which is common practice in healthcare fields. This was only possible due to the extensive training I received in optometry school, learning anatomy, pharmacology, and many facets of patient care such as identifying lesions and determining their need for removal with a straightforward procedure and/or referral to a tertiary care provider for more extensive treatment. I also mastered the ability to do an array of physical tasks, such as working under a microscope (slit lamp), performing gonioscopy (key component of SLT), and removing embedded foreign bodies from the eye, including the cornea, one of the most critical parts of the visual system. This provided the knowledge and physical dexterity to allow me to become proficient in these procedures in a continuing education program, much as an ophthalmologist would learn a new skill or technique at a continuing education course. In fact, that is why continuing education is required of all health care providers – to continually update skills and training to provide the best care possible to our patients.

It is important to note that when any healthcare profession attempts to modernize its scope of practice, medical doctors in opposition point to concerns of safety for patients. While concern for their patients is a worthy cause, the facts must be examined, and this argument must be deemed unsubstantiated. Thirty years ago, when the Kansas optometry scope of practice was modified to include use of topical and oral medications, organized medicine argued that patient safety would be compromised. These concerns proved to be unfounded. The Kansas State Board of Examiners in Optometry regulates the profession and verifies that Kansas licensed optometrists are educated, trained and certified to perform procedures within the optometric scope of practice, all with the goal of ensuring public safety.

Kansas optometrist put the needs and safety of their patients above all else. We are confident in modernizing our scope of practice because we have a historical perspective that proves optometrists will safely provide these procedures. A few key points include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The malpractice rates for optometrists in the 14 states where optometrists perform these procedures have not increased in comparison to the states where these procedures are not allowed. In fact, Kansas optometrists pay the same rates as optometrists in Oklahoma do, despite a near 30-year history of doctors in Oklahoma providing these services.
- Complications can arise as a result of any medical procedures, and it is the desire of every health care provider to minimize these wherever possible. In the more than 146,000 procedures performed by optometrists, the complication rate was minimal and not greater than with these procedures were performed by ophthalmologists. If an increase in complications was occurring, it would be reflected in rising malpractice rates.
- Currently, optometry is providing post-operative care for patients undergoing these procedures by ophthalmologists and they deal with complications for patients by providing care that is within their scope or referring to a specialist to address the concerns. So, managing these complications is not a new aspect of care for optometrists.
- No state that has modernized their optometry scope has seen a need to revoke the new scope of practice. This data directly illustrates the quality outcomes that occur when optometrists perform these procedures.

Optometrists are often the primary eye care provider in the U.S. The main roles include completing most eye exams, identifying, and providing treatment for most eye conditions, and referring when a level of care outside of their education and training is indicated. HB 2223 allows optometrists to continue to do exactly this. In the last 30 years since the optometry scope of practice has been modified, changes in both education and technology have impacted the level of care that we are able to provide.

Those in opposition to this bill will highlight the differences in training between optometrists and ophthalmologists. I would never argue nor question the training of an ophthalmologist; but the question is not the level of education of a medical doctor; nor is it a question of who has the highest level of surgical training. The question is: are optometrists well-educated, trained, and certified to perform the procedures in HB 2223? The answer is a resounding YES! This is supported by more than 146,000 procedures performed safely by optometrists in 12 states. The optometric community is not merely speculating impact that HB 2223 will on the safety of Kansas citizens, we are examining known facts, confirming our track record, and holding our profession to the highest standards necessary to ensure the outcomes our patients deserve.

I strongly and respectfully ask this committee to pass HB 2223 out of committee for consideration by the Kansas House of Representatives, thus allowing for the modernization of optometric scope in Kansas. HB 2223 allows Kansas optometrists the ability to provide care for our patients in the way we were educated and trained to provide, continuing to deliver the patients of Kansas access to the quality care they deserve.



Shane R. Kannarr, OD

Kannarr Eye Care Optometrist

Managing member skannarr@kannarreycare.com

620-235-1737 office

620-687-2845 cell

Eric C. McPeak, O.D.

706 Oregon St.
PO Box 336
Hiawatha, KS 66434
(785) 742-3021

1823 Chase St.
Falls City, NE 68355
(402) 245-2017

January 27, 2026

Sen. Beverly Gossage, Chairperson
Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, KS. 66612

RE: Letter in support of HB 2223

Senator Gossage:

Please accept this letter in my support of HB 2223. Please feel free to disseminate this correspondence to the other members of your committee.

I am a second generation Kansas Optometrist practicing in the town where I was born in up north in Hiawatha. I grew up in Wamego, KS and realized I wanted to follow my father's footsteps and be a small business owner and practicing optometrist. He encouraged me to look at several schools and I had offers to optometry schools in Houston, St. Louis, Birmingham, Philadelphia, Memphis and Tahlequah, OK. My father graduated from the University of Houston but felt like the school in Oklahoma would be a better fit due to class size and state law. I applied to optometry school in 1994. I did choose to attend optometry school in Oklahoma and was so excited to graduate and do all of the procedures and techniques I learned in school in private practice. I knew Kansas did not have those laws when I graduated in 1999 but just knew it couldn't be long.

I did acquire my Oklahoma license in 1999 and as part of my training performed all of the procedures in HB 2223 on patients. Upon completion of my training, I was ready to bring my skills to Kansas.

I moved back to Kansas and started a practice in Hiawatha. However I have not been able to practice to the level of my training in Kansas. I have maintained my Oklahoma license since I received it in 1999 and have continued to meet the requirements for relicensure in Oklahoma while also meeting the requirements for my Kansas license so I can legally perform these procedures in the State of Oklahoma. I have a classmate who I graduated with in 1999 and he has performed more than 2200 of these procedures in the state of Oklahoma.

Eric C. McPeak, O.D.

706 Oregon St.
PO Box 336
Hiawatha, KS 66434
(785) 742-3021

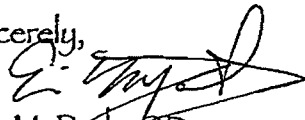
1823 Chase St.
Falls City, NE 68355
(402) 245-2017

Unfortunately, I am unable to perform these procedures in Hiawatha, and I have to refer them out of Kansas to St. Joseph, MO because that is where the closest ophthalmologist practices who can do them. So, our current state law is not only limiting me from doing these procedures, but also preventing my patients from getting this care in the State of Kansas.

If what our counterparts say is true in that we are not qualified to do these procedures in our bill, then why have my classmates in Oklahoma been qualified to do them for over a quarter of a century? Why is the medical malpractice insurance cost the same for an Oklahoma optometrist as it is for a Kansas optometrist?

For all of these reasons, I strongly encourage your committee to approve HB 2223. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. I plan on being in attendance on Thursday at the committee hearing.

Sincerely,



Eric McPeak, OD

January 22, 2026

Senate Committee on Public Health & Welfare
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Chair Gossage and Members of the Committee,

I am a 78-year-old, longtime resident of Girard, Kansas. I urge you to support HB 2223, which would allow optometrists to perform certain laser and minor office procedures.

My optometrist diagnosed me with glaucoma several years ago. In 2016, he referred me to an ophthalmologist in Overland Park for cataract surgery and a shunt procedure to help control my glaucoma. The specialist performed the surgery, and my optometrist managed my follow-up care. The surgery cleared my vision and lowered my eye pressure, reducing my need for eye drops for several years.

In 2019, and again in 2021, I needed a Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty (SLT) procedure due to rising eye pressure. Each time, I had to travel to Overland Park, even though my optometrist explained that if he practiced just 30 miles south in Oklahoma, he would have been allowed to perform this laser treatment himself.

In December 2024, I visited my optometrist because of blurry vision in my left eye that was affecting my driving and reading. He found a film behind my lens implant that required a YAG capsulotomy—another procedure he is not allowed to perform. I was able to have it done last week in Parsons, but only because an ophthalmologist from Emporia visits there twice a month. If my optometrist were allowed to perform this procedure, I would not have had to wait months for care.

There are no ophthalmologists regularly performing eye surgery in Southeast Kansas. This forces patients like me to travel long distances and experience unnecessary delays for essential procedures. Please support HB 2223 to improve timely access to eye care for Kansans.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Barbara Mikrut
610 S. Burnett
Girard, KS 66743

The Honorable Beverly Gossage,
Chair Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
Room 445-S

Dear Chair Gossage and Members of the Committee,

I am Diane Montgomery Cox, a 78-year-old resident living in Rawlins County, Kansas. I urge you to support HB 2223, which would allow optometrists to perform certain laser and minor office procedures.

I underwent a YAG Capsulotomy to correct a film that had developed behind my lens implant, which was causing blurry vision and making daily activities like reading and driving difficult. Although my optometrist diagnosed the issue, I had to wait for an available ophthalmologist to perform the procedure, leading to unnecessary delays in my care.

The ophthalmologist who ultimately performed my procedure was from Colorado, as I was unable to get an appointment with a Kansas ophthalmologist, after multiple calls and referrals to more than one Kansas location. I had to drive an additional 33 miles each way to receive the care I needed as optometrists are not able to perform this procedure in Colby, KS where I would have preferred to go for this type of care.

Had my optometrist been permitted to perform this procedure, I would have received treatment sooner and avoided the inconvenience of scheduling with a distant, out of state, specialist. Like many others in our state, I believe improving access to timely eye care is essential, particularly for seniors who rely on these procedures to maintain their independence and quality of life.

There are too few ophthalmologists available to meet patient needs, forcing many of us to travel long distances and endure wait times that can negatively impact our vision and daily functioning. I respectfully ask for your support of HB 2223 to improve access to essential eye care services.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Diane Montgomery-Cox
Sincerely,

Diane Montgomery Cox
10001 Road L
McDonald, KS 67745

Testimony of Dr. Natalie Nibert in Support of HB 2223

Before the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee of the Kansas State Legislature

January 27, 2026

Thank you, Chairman Gossage, Vice Chairman Clifford, Ranking Member Cindy Holscher, and Members of the Committee for holding this hearing on this important bill. My name is Natalie Nibert, and I am an optometrist originally from Wichita now practicing in Kansas City, KS. I am writing in support of HB 2223.

I graduated summa cum laude from Southern College of Optometry (SCO) in Memphis, TN in 2021. I then completed a residency in Pediatric Optometry and Vision Therapy and Rehabilitation in 2022 and earned a Fellowship in the American Academy of Optometry in 2023. Additionally, I completed a 32-hour continuing education course on Advanced Procedures presented by Northeastern State University College of Optometry in 2023.

At SCO, students begin administering primary care eye exams in their third year while maintaining coursework and preparing for national board exams. Part of our curriculum included a semester-long course on laser and advanced procedures, incorporating hands-on training with model eyes. It has been documented in literature that ophthalmology residents receive similar training on model eyes for laser procedures¹. By our fourth year, we engaged in specialized clinical rotations and externships across the country, gaining real-world experience. In SCO's ocular disease department, we had opportunities to observe procedures such as chalazion removal and fluorescein angiography. Optometry schools nationwide have similar externship programs that allow students to gain clinical experience in diverse settings.

During my fourth year, I chose to complete an externship at an OD-MD referral center in Oklahoma, where fourth-year optometry students regularly perform laser procedures under the supervision of an attending OD or MD. Since 1998, Oklahoma optometrists have been legally authorized to perform these procedures. During my externship, I performed these laser procedures on live patients. However, upon returning to Kansas to practice, I found myself unable to perform the same procedures I had been trained in and had successfully completed in Oklahoma.

States such as Oklahoma, Kentucky, and Louisiana have established highly competitive externship programs, attracting top optometry students who seek to fully utilize their training. Graduating optometrists are ready for opportunities to perform these procedures to better serve their communities. Providing laser procedures would significantly benefit our patients—particularly those with glaucoma—by providing treatment options that reduce dependence on costly and time-consuming eye drop regimens. These procedures are some of the most effective treatments available for managing glaucoma, improving patient outcomes and satisfaction.

As a Kansas resident, I want to see our state remain competitive with our neighbors, such as Colorado, Oklahoma, and Arkansas in optometric scope of practice. The passing of this bill will help attract and retain talented young professionals, particularly those who seek to practice at the highest level of their training. I encourage you to vote in favor of HB 2223.

Thank you in advance to Chairman Gossage, Vice Chairman Clifford, Ranking Member Cindy Holscher, and Members of the Committee for your time considering this cause and reading my testimony.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Natalie Nibert", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Natalie Nibert, OD, FAAO

Wyandotte Family EyeCare Center
21 North 12th St
Suite 102
Kansas City, Kansas 66102
(913)342-4405

References

1. Wen JC, Rezaei KA, Lam DL. Laser Peripheral Iridotomy Curriculum: Lecture and Simulation Practical. MedEdPORTAL. 2020;16:10903.



HB 2223 Proponent Testimony – Written Only

Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare

Expanding Scope of Practice for Optometrists

Elizabeth Patton- Regional Director, Americans for Prosperity Kansas

January 29, 2026

Chair Gossage and Members of the Committee,

We appreciate this opportunity to submit written proponent testimony for HB 2223, which expands the scope of practice for optometrists in Kansas, allowing them to fully practice and serve patients in the full scope of their education and training. This bill would allow them to perform procedures and use medical devices while updating credentialing and education requirements and establishing a mechanism for background checks. We hold the following position on HB 2223:

1. Expanding Access to Eye Care, Especially in Rural Areas
2. Reducing Costs and Unnecessary Referrals
3. Keeping Kansas Competitive with Other States Expanding Access to Eye Care.

Expanding Access to Eye Care, Especially in Rural Areas

Many Kansans, particularly in rural communities, struggle to access timely eye care due to a shortage of ophthalmologists. This shortage often results in long wait times or the need to travel significant distances for routine eye care.

HB 2223 is a common-sense reform which allows optometrists to perform minor, in-office procedures within their training—such as removing foreign objects, minor laser treatments, and other non-invasive procedures—ensuring more timely care for patients.¹

Reducing Costs and Unnecessary Referrals

Under current law, patients are often referred to specialists for simple procedures that optometrists are fully trained to handle. This creates unnecessary costs for families and burdens

¹ American Optometric Association, "In rural America, opportunity for optometry amid shortfall of ophthalmologists." Available at: <https://www.aoa.org/news/advocacy/state-advocacy/in-rural-americaopportunity-for-optometry-amid-shortfall-of-ophthalmologists>

an already strained healthcare system. By allowing optometrists to provide these services, HB 2223 eliminates needless referrals and reduces healthcare expenses while maintaining patient safety.²

Keeping Kansas Competitive with Other States

Several neighboring states, including Oklahoma, Colorado, Wyoming, and Arkansas, already allow optometrists to perform the procedures outlined in HB 2223. Kansas risks falling behind in healthcare accessibility if we do not modernize our laws.

This bill ensures that our state remains competitive in attracting and retaining skilled optometrists to serve our communities.³ HB 2223 is a responsible update that benefits Kansas patients, lowers costs, and improves access to care. I respectfully ask the committee to pass this bill and move it forward in the legislative process.

² Kansas Legislature Testimony, House Health and Human Services Committee. Available at: https://www.kslegislature.gov/li/b2025_26/committees/ctte_h_hhs_1/documents/testimony/20250312_01.pdf

³ Kansas Legislature Testimony, House Health and Human Services Committee. Available at: https://www.kslegislature.gov/li/b2025_26/committees/ctte_h_hhs_1/documents/testimony/20250312_01.pdf

Testimony of Dr. Jonathan Reddell in Support of HB 2223

Before the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee of the Kansas State Legislature

January 27, 2026

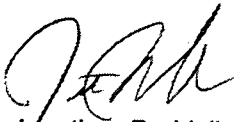
Thank you, Chairman Gossage, Vice Chairman Clifford, Ranking Member Cindy Holscher, and Members of the Committee for holding this hearing on this important bill. My name is Natalie Nibert, and I am an optometrist originally from Wichita now practicing in Kansas City, KS. I am writing in support of HB 2223.

My name is Jonathan Reddell and I am an optometrist with Family Eyecare Center. We serve patients in Leavenworth, KS. I have attached our internal referral sheet, with patient info redacted, showing wait times for the in office procedures that HB 2223 would allow optometrist to perform.

Currently, these patients are in our office and are diagnosed and referred to an ophthalmologist for the procedure (in these cases YAG and SLT – 2 of the laser procedures HB2223 would address). The patient goes to Kansas City for an evaluation with the ophthalmologist where the diagnosis is confirmed. If both eyes need the procedure, one is done about 2-3 weeks after the evaluation and the second eye is done 2-3 weeks after that. The patient then returns to our office after the procedure to see if there are any complications that we need to handle.

Attached is our sheet, "FEC Referral Sheet," that we use to track when the referral was made to the ophthalmologist from office and when their first appointment is for the evaluation. We usually tell our patients to expect 8 – 12 weeks to get in for the visit and an additional 4-6 weeks to get through both eyes.

HB 2223 would allow optometrist to perform these in office procedures which would reduce the number of visits and health care resources. Thank you in advance to Chairman Gossage, Vice Chairman Clifford, Ranking Member Cindy Holscher, and Members of the Committee for your time considering this cause and reading my testimony.



Jonathan Reddell
Family Eyecare Center
2301 Tenth Ave
Leavenworth KS 66048

Attached: FEC Referral Sheet

FEC Doctor	First Name	Last Name	DOB	Request Date	Consult Reason	Consult Doc	Consult Location	Consult Location	Fixed	Paperwork
Slerner				1-Dec	YAG			1/16/26 11a		
Ashley				8-Dec	YAG OS			2/12/26 3p		
Reddell				8-Dec	SLT			3/11/26 730a		
Gunn				12-Dec	SLT			4/3/26 930a		
Slerner				17-Dec	YAG/SLT			4/6/26 11a		
Gunn				19-Dec	YAG			3/6/26 745a		
Reddell				19-Dec	YAG			3/12/26 1245p		
Reddell				19-Dec	YAG			3/12/26 2p		
Ashley				19-Dec	YAG			3/6/26 745a		
Reddell				6-Jan	YAG			3/24/26 945a		
Reddell				7-Jan	YAG OD			3/27/26 8a		
Reddell				14-Jan	YAG			3/27/26 11a		

DRS. HAWKS, BESLER, ROGERS & STOPPEL



OPTOMETRISTS

Terry F. Hawks, O.D., F.A.A.O.
Diplomate, American Board of Optometry

L. Gregory Besler, O.D., F.A.A.O.

Jason B. Rogers, O.D.
Diplomate, American Board of Optometry

Jon B. Stoppel, O.D.

January 23, 2026

Sen. Beverly Gossage, Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka, KS 66612

Re: Support for House Bill 2223

Dear Sen. Gossage:

I am writing in support of HB2223 to modernize the optometry scope of practice in the State of Kansas.

In 1995, I graduated from Northeastern State University – Oklahoma College of Optometry. As an optometry student, I was educated and trained on the procedures included in HB2223.

Many states allow optometrists to perform laser and eyelid procedures, 14 and 21 respectively, including the surrounding states of Colorado, Oklahoma and Arkansas. The optometric education model has proven to properly train optometrists to deliver safe and effective outcomes. The safety profile is reflected in professional liability insurance rates that are similar in states that allow the procedures as compared to states that do not. Oklahoma optometrists have been performing the procedures in this bill for nearly 30 years and their rates are the same as I pay in Kansas. It is important to note in states that have modernized the scope of practice, none has repealed any statutory authority to perform laser and eyelid procedures.

I have spent my entire career practicing in Kansas and have been unable to take care of my patients at the level of my education. Since 1995, I have maintained a license in Oklahoma where I am authorized to perform the procedures in the bill.

As a provider, my goal is to be able to provide optometric services in a manner that reflects my level of education and training. This bill will recognize current optometric education and training and allow optometrists to practice to that level in Kansas, and would give patients a choice of where to receive their care.

I respectfully ask for your support for HB2223.

Sincerely,

Jason Rogers, O.D.

January 22, 2026

John Weingart
217 Sioux Ave
Hiawatha, KS 66434

Senator Beverly Gossage, Chairperson
Senate Health Committee
Kansas State House
Topeka, KS

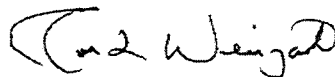
Dear Senator Gossage,

I rise at this time to seek your support for HB2223. I am confident that the expanded procedures granted by HB2223 would be safe and sound. Oklahoma allows this service and has for many years.

I support this to help practitioners expand their service and revenue. I deal with issues of loss of professional services in a rural area.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John L. Weingart". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "J" and "W".

John L. Weingart

Senator Beverly Gossage, Chairwoman

Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

Chairwoman Gossage and Members of the Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare:

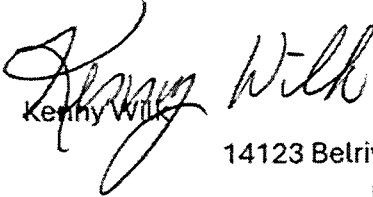
Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 2223, which seeks to modernize the optometric scope of practice.

I had cataract surgery in 2021 with a great outcome and 20/20 vision. After a couple of years, I began noticing that my vision was starting to become hazy and I made an appointment with my optometrist. He informed me that I needed a YAG capsulotomy and referred me to an ophthalmologist for the procedure. While the procedure itself only took a few minutes, it was frustrating that I had to wait to get in for an evaluation where the diagnosis was confirmed and then come back a few weeks later for the actual procedure.

My optometrist let me know that while he was trained to provide these procedures (and optometrists in some surrounding states can perform these in-office procedures), he was unable to provide these services so because the scope of practice in Kansas did not reflect current optometric education and training. If his scope was updated to allow him to perform the procedure he is trained to do, it would have saved both time and expense.

I encourage you to support HB 2223 to allow optometrists to perform procedures such as these which are part of their education and training.

Thank you for your consideration and your service to the citizens of Kansas.


Kenny Wilk

14123 Belrive Cir.

Basehor, KS 66007

Sen. Beverly Gossage, Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare

1/22/2026

Dear Chairwoman Gossage,

I am writing to you in support of House Bill 2223. I was pleased the bill passed the House in 2025 with overwhelming support and that it has been sent to the Senate.

I am a lifelong Kansan. My family and I reside in De Soto. Six members of my family are long-time patients of optometrist Dr. Jason Rogers of Gardner, KS.

Currently I have an ocular condition that could be treated with a laser procedure referred to as laser trabeculoplasty. My optometrist has received training that has prepared him to treat my condition. Unfortunately, the current law restricts him from providing me with the laser treatment and restricts me from receiving care where I choose. The current law also increases my waiting time for a referral and the costs associated with seeing another doctor.

For these reasons I request your support for House Bill 2223.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barry Zimmerman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Barry Zimmerman
32215 West 91st Street
De Soto, KS 66018
913/484-8155