

Statement of Jim Boccuzzi O.D.  
In Support of HB 7159  
Public Health Committee  
March 5, 2007

Members of the Committee:

I am a licensed Optometric Doctor with 27 years of practice in Connecticut. I would like to offer a few comments in regard to HB 7159, *An Act Updating the Scope of Practice of Optometry*.

As the title implies, this bill *updates* our scope, it does not make any radical changes. It does not involve surgery. It does not expand us into uncharted territory. It simply *updates* responsibilities we have already been authorized over the past two decades.

As a licensed profession we would *never* propose legislation that is beyond our capabilities, as this would harm not only the patients we serve but our profession as well.

Would the State of Connecticut really be happy and satisfied with a profession that did not strive to be the best it can? Technology changes, this world changes every day. The profession of Optometry should not, and will not, sit still simply because our opposition would like us to.

You will hear some things about this bill from our opponents. Things you have heard before, kind of "Déjà vu..... All over again".

- In 1986, we asked to use Diagnostic Agents. Our opponents said patients would die.
- In 1991, we asked to treat eye infections. Our opponents said patients would go blind.
- In 1996, we asked to treat Glaucoma. Again our opponents predicted catastrophe.

Each time, you rejected those arguments and trusted us. I would ask you to do so again.

Our body of work over the last twenty years—handling medications and the conditions that they treat—is exemplary. In fact, there has not been *one* case of malpractice involving the privileges earned in our last scope of practice change reported to the American Optometric Association's insurance carrier. *Twenty years of credibility and performance is what the profession of Optometry in Connecticut stands on.*

The issues involved in this legislation are to remove limitations that are either artificial (such as the 35mm limit on treatment of open angle glaucoma) or too restrictive (such as the present limitation on treatment of iritis). *Again, we are not asking to perform surgery.* The current statute clearly prohibits this and that clause will remain. Any statements to the contrary are simply not true.

***We are asking to expand treatment of conditions that we have already proven we can treat well.*** We feel removing these limitations will allow us to better serve our patient population now and in the future. Without a doubt, Optometry is *the* primary eye care provider in this state. In addition, we service the vast majority of those enrolled in Medicaid, HUSKY and SAGA.

In fact, after being reinstated to SAGA, some of my colleagues tell me that they were inundated with phone calls from people who had not seen any eye care practitioner for several years. The point is that there are populations of people that *only* see Optometrists. If we are not allowed to keep up with the changing landscape of health care, we will not be able to serve our patients to the best of our ability.

In closing, Optometry is asking for this legislature to believe in us again. We stand on our performance and have never given you reason to doubt us. We are ready to once again prove our ability to serve the people of the State of Connecticut.

For these reasons, I urge you to support HB 7159. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.