



NORTHEASTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

OKLAHOMA

COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRY

To: Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

From: Cori Dorrell
Immediate Past President of the Oklahoma Optometric Student Association
Northeastern State University Oklahoma College of Optometry Class of 2025
dorrellc@nsuok.edu
(785)-850-0094
February 18th, 2024

RE: SB 490

I send my condolences for not being free to attend the February 20th hearing regarding SB 490. Within this letter I would like to share how the optometry scope modernization bill impacts myself and other students who are considering practicing in Kansas.

As students, my classmates and I have chosen to devote 4 years of professional training at *Northeastern State University Oklahoma College of Optometry (NSUOCO)* in order to be adept to provide our current and future patients with elite care. We receive full-scope training including in-office eyelid lumps and bumps removal, as well as SLT, YAG and PI laser procedures, which were added to Oklahoma scope and have been practiced in Oklahoma since 1998. The ability to perform these procedures carries a great deal of weight when students are deciding which state to practice in.

When considering the career ahead of me, I can see that the future of the profession is trending towards ocular disease management and deviating from the historical model where an optometrist can make ends meet by relying on spectacle and contact lens sales alone. I must also consider that optometry school tuition prices are rising out of proportion to eye exam reimbursements, which makes my income capabilities a large factor when considering where to open a private practice. I have always hoped to open a private practice in rural Northeast Kansas, however, I'm afraid meeting this goal will not be possible if the current Kansas scope is not modernized, causing myself and other students to consider other states of residency.

It's the goal of any optometrist to provide the best eye care to members of our individual communities whether large or small. If optometrists in Kansas were able to use our full scope training, we could increase access to care not only for patients in rural communities, but also in urban areas. In larger cities ophthalmologists are currently booking out weeks in advance causing patients to wait for procedures that optometrists are trained to perform and could quickly complete down the hall in their individual offices if scope were to be modernized. This would result in freeing the ophthalmologists for emergent eye care referrals and advanced procedures.



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These reasons stated above are examples of why I am passionate about advocating for optometry and patient care in the state of Kansas. To fully convey that other students at NSUOCO feel similarly about the necessity of scope changes, I have asked for an additional personal testimony, which is stated below.

“I believe the scope modernization in Kansas is necessary as the optometric demand in the state of Kansas is increasing. I am a first-year student at *Northeastern State University Oklahoma College of Optometry*, and I will be returning to Kansas once I finish my education. The push for me to go to optometry school stems from my father, who suffers from an optometric condition. It is rough seeing a person I look up to no longer having full vision. A person who is becoming incapable of performing some of his daily tasks. This situation is not uncommon as more and more patients are aging and needing optometric care. However, the care they need may be out of the current scope of practice for optometrists in Kansas. With the growing number of patients needing care outpacing the current doctors that can provide that care, it is logical to expand the scope of practice for optometrists in Kansas to meet that need. Meeting the need would future optometrists like me ensure a betterment of eye health for Kansans, so that they can continue living life with healthy vision.”

Bach Nguyen
NSUOCO Class
of 2027

I hope I have been able to show that the topic of scope modernization has become apparent to students even in their first year of school. NSUOCO students and other students throughout the nation are passionate about bringing progression to the optometric profession.

Thank you for the continued work you do for the profession of optometry and our patients. Please let me know if you would like any further information. You can reach me at (785)-850-0094.

Sincerely,

Cori Dorrell
NSUOCO Class of 2025