

Testimony of Natalie Nibert in Support of HB 2223

Before the Health and Human Services Committee of the Kansas State Legislature

March 7, 2025

Thank you, Chairman Carpenter, Vice Chairman Bryce, Ranking Member Susan Ruiz, and Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services for holding this hearing on this important bill. My name is Dr. 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 certification program for the procedures outlined in HB2223 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. Our curriculum included education 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. At 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. While there I witnessed a highly productive and collaborative partnership between ophthalmologists and optometrists, working seamlessly to provide the best care to patients. When optometrists perform these procedures, ophthalmologists can dedicate more time to complex surgical cases and specialized care, improving overall efficiency. During my externship, I successfully performed 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 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 Carpenter, Vice Chairman Bryce, Ranking Member Susan Ruiz, and Members of the Committee for your time considering this cause and reading my testimony.

Thank you,

Natalie Nibert, OD, FAAO

References

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