



To: Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

From: Rachelle Colombo
Executive Director

Date: January 29, 2026

Re: HB 2223; Expanding Optometry Scope of Practice

The Kansas Medical Society (KMS) appreciates the opportunity to testify in opposition to HB 2223, expanding Optometry Scope of Practice. Under HB 2223, optometrists would be authorized to perform several surgical procedures and treatments currently reserved for those trained and licensed as medical doctors (MDs) and doctors of osteopathy (DOs). This represents a significant and broad expansion to current law. Scope of practice issues are sometimes seen as “turf battles” about professional competitiveness. But it is critical to consider how the law protects patients by requiring appropriate education, training, licensure, and oversight of those who hold themselves out to provide medical care.

The last time the optometry practice act was amended was in 2010, after extensive meetings between optometrists and ophthalmologists to discuss the changes in training and education that supported expansion in optometric scope without compromising patient care. These changes were discussed at length and agreed to before being brought to the legislature. When the involved professions work together to outline appropriate statutory changes that clearly outline the role of each profession and protect the public, it yields better policymaking. The changes outlined in HB 2223 are highly technical and cover a broad array of procedures that non-providers may not be familiar with and ready to determine appropriate limitations that consider the differences in the field of optometry and that of a physician. This challenge is not unique to the legislature – individuals seeking care often struggle to distinguish the difference between types of health care providers and the care they can offer and the recourse available in the event of an adverse outcome.

The Kansas Medical Society believes that those who practice medicine and surgery must be trained, licensed, and regulated at the highest level. This standard should be applied to all who practice any aspect of medicine or perform surgery, not just medical doctors and doctors of osteopathy. Providers seeking to expand their scope to allow for independent diagnosis, treatment, prescribing and the performance of surgery must be subject to uniform requirements for licensure and to carry medical professional liability coverage and participate in the Health Care Stabilization Fund as a condition of licensure. These standards should not differentiate among provider types if the practice overlaps into independent medical practice.

Since the 2025 session, communication between The Kansas Optometric Association and the Kansas Medical Society has continued. While we do not support the underlying premise of the bill, we do appreciate the Kansas Optometric Association’s willingness to address some of our concerns.

The proponents have agreed to seek an amendment which would reorganize the Interprofessional Advisory Committee (IPAC), which is appointed by and attached to the Board of Examiners in Optometry, to review and make recommendations to the Board of Examiners about the use of additional technologies not explicitly outlined in this legislation. The IPAC is comprised of an equal number of optometrists and ophthalmologists and must make a positive recommendation of a new technology before the Board of Examiners can approve its use. The Kansas Medical Society believes this measure addresses necessary physician oversight in the use of medical technologies that may or may not be appropriate for administration by non-physicians.

Additionally, the proponents have agreed to add language requiring participation in the Health Care Stabilization Fund as a condition of licensure for optometrists. Surgical procedures can result in patient harm and those who perform them should all be held to the same standards for training, education, oversight and liability so that patients are protected and have an assured source of recovery for damages caused by negligence.

While KMS does not support HB 2223, we do believe these two provisions are critical improvements to this policy proposal that will help to better protect patients. We appreciate the proponent's willingness to work with us to address those specific concerns and ask that those amendments be adopted if the bill is advanced.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments in opposition to HB 2223.