

# KANSAS OPTOMETRIC ASSOCIATION

1266 SW Topeka Blvd. • Topeka, KS 66612  
(785) 232-0225 • (785) 232-6151 (FAX)  
[www.kansasoptometric.org](http://www.kansasoptometric.org)

March 18, 2015

TO: House Health and Human Services Committee

FROM: Mark Norris, OD

RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill 2319

My name is Mark Norris. I am an optometrist with practice locations in Leavenworth, Bonner Springs, and Wyandotte County and I am a past president of the Kansas Optometric Association, which represents optometrists across Kansas. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 2319.

We believe that the Kansas solution proposed by the Kansas Hospital Association will allow those families who currently don't qualify for KanCare but can't afford health insurance to receive the preventive health care they need and avoid unnecessary trips to the emergency room and better manage chronic health issues.

As primary eye care providers, optometrists not only diagnose and treat vision problems and eye disease, but also detect a multitude of other health issues, ranging from high blood pressure and diabetes to glaucoma and other significant health issues. Early detection and treatment can have significant impact on a patients' overall health and result in considerable cost savings.

Proper vision care early in a child's life is especially critical, with 80 percent of learning a result of visual processing. Because of this, many optometrists across the state participate in the See To Learn® Program, where they provide free vision assessments to three-year-old children. About 15 percent of the children seen through the program have a vision problem and this number grows to 20 percent by kindergarten and 30 percent by high school graduation. Some of the vision conditions can be treated with eyewear, while others may require surgery or other treatment and can result in permanent loss of vision if not detected and treated at an early age. Many of these vision issues have a direct impact on a child's ability to learn and can affect career opportunities down the road, so it is critical that every child have access to regular preventive eye health and vision care.

We appreciate your consideration of the Kansas solution proposed by the KHA and request your support of HB 2319.

Thank you for your time and commitment to the state of Kansas.