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To: Senate Commerce Committee
Senator Robert Olson
From: Jan Murray, Executive Officer
Kansas State Board of Examiners in Optometry
Date: January 27, 2021
Subject: Opposition to Senate Bill 10 -- Written testimony only

The Kansas State Board of Examiners in Optometry (KSSBEO) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony regarding Senate Bill 10. KSSBEO stands in opposition to the bill.

The mission of the KSSBEO is to administer and enforce the provisions of the Kansas Optometry Law to ensure the highest quality of eye care is provided to the citizens of Kansas. Optometrists in Kansas are independent primary health care providers who examine, diagnose, treat and manage diseases and disorders of the visual system, the eye and associated structures, as well as diagnose related systemic conditions.

Optometrists examine the internal and external structures of the eyes to diagnose eye diseases such as glaucoma, cataracts, and retinal disorders; systemic diseases including hypertension and diabetes; and numerous vision conditions (including nearsightedness, farsightedness, astigmatism, and presbyopia). Optometrists also determine the patient's ability to focus and coordinate the eyes, and to judge depth and colors accurately. They prescribe eyeglasses and contact lenses, low vision aids, vision therapy and medicines to treat eye diseases. As primary care providers, optometrists are an integral part of the health care team and an entry point into the health care system. They are skilled in the co-management of health care that affects the eye health and vision of their patients and an excellent source of referral to other health care professionals.

SB 10 would significantly diminish the ability of the KSSBEO to fulfill its mission of public protection. In a cumbersome environment with near-constant review, revision, and defense of existing regulations, the KSSBEO would be left with few resources to ensure the citizens of Kansas are receiving appropriate optometric care. KSSBEO's legal expenses would substantively increase in its defense of regulations and other unnecessary costs associated with expanded litigation. The amount of this increase would be challenging to budget, and almost certainly would require an increase of the fees currently assessed of the licensees of Kansas.

The core mission of KSSBEO is to protect the public through ensuring compliance with the statutes, rules, and regulations surrounding the practice of optometry in Kansas. With an increase in legal activity stemming from repetitious review and defense of existing optometric practice law, there would be far fewer resources to ensure optimal optometric care for the citizens of Kansas. SB 10 would undoubtedly complicate the mission of the KSSBEO, increasing costs and need for additional manpower within this state agency.

The KSSBEO respectfully requests the Committee does not pass SB 10.