



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
**WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM**

BILL NUMBER: <b>HB 1963</b>		DATE: <b>2/13/2024</b>
COMMITTEE: <b>Professional Registration and Licensing</b>		
<b>TESTIFYING:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES		
<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>ANGEL NOVEL SIMMONS</b>		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
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CITY:		STATE:      ZIP:
EMAIL: <b>fishnovel@yahoo.com</b>	ATTENDANCE: <b>In-Person</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>2/13/2024 8:07 PM</b>
<b>THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.</b>		

Hello Chairman Coleman and the entire committee. My name Dr. Angel Novel Simmons, I have been a practicing Missouri optometrist for over 20 years, having graduated from the UMSL College of Optometry in 2003. UMSL has been educating Missouri OD's for 40 years. Not only do I attend to the patient care needs of Missourians, but I educate the optometric students in the state's only optometry school, where I serve as an Assistant Clinical Professor and the Director of the 4th Year Clinical Program and Continuing Education. There are only 24 optometry schools in the United States, with 2 schools in Canada and one in Puerto Rico. Each year, optometric programs across the country graduate nearly 1700 independent practitioners. All schools are accredited by an accrediting body that evaluates and adjusts curricular demands as the needs of patients continue to evolve, in short, there is uniformity in education across the nation. If you attend one school or college you can be licensed in any state. Missouri is fortunate to have a great college here, that is accredited by the ACOE and graduates between 40-45 students per year. We educate, certify, and train our students to the highest scope of practice, which includes all the in-office procedures being outlined in our proposed legislation. The first-year curriculum includes a deep dive into the anatomy and physiology of the entire body, study neurology, optics, and optometric care. The need to understand the entire body is fundamental in connecting the body to the eyes. This begins on Day 1. The curriculum continues to progress in its complexity through the 2nd and 3rd year. The students are evaluated constantly to ensure that they are efficient and effective in patient care. The final year of the optometric program is clinical. The students will see over 1000 patients during this time, in a variety of modalities, from pediatrics to surgical co-management, including hands-on experience in performing the in-office procedures outlined in the Missouri Optometry Modernization Act. Often, our students are working in tandem with ophthalmology residents and doctors to provide eyecare to our patients. It is a slap in the face to suggest that a weekend course can allow you to bypass 4 years of comprehensive education on the complexities of eye care and management. To become a licensed optometrist in any state, including Missouri, the students must meet all the graduation requirements of the rigorous program, pass 3 sets of national boards, and comply with each state's board of optometry regulations. Optometry is one of the few professions that ensures competency prior to graduation, allowing optometrists to practice independently once licensed. Thank you for your time today and if I can answer any questions.



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>JEFFREY MARC GAMBLE</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
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EMAIL: <b>jmgamble@socket.net</b>	ATTENDANCE: <b>In-Person</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>2/13/2024 10:42 AM</b>	

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Ladies and gentlemen of the committee. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to speak with you this afternoon about a very important piece of legislation in House Bill 1963. My name is Dr. Jeff Gamble and I am speaking today in support of House Bill 1963. I am an optometrist at Missouri Eye Consultants, a multidisciplinary practice located in Columbia, MO. I've been in private practice for over 20 years. Over the last 20 years I have come before this body multiple times in similar situations seeking to convey the merits of my profession. Each and every time, our opposition has made consistent and repeated attempts at restricting my profession. The mantra that we aren't trained well enough has persisted throughout those 20 years. I've even witnessed testimony that suggested optometrists were going to kill people with eyedrops. This mantra is the reason House Bill 1963 looks a little bit different than what you might expect from this type of legislation. I have met with leadership of the opposition multiple times, and they are unwilling to compromise. They suggest if we open the door to this language, we will compromise patient safety, produce unregulated providers and threaten the integrity of our healthcare delivery system. I would suggest they have been wrong in the past, and they are wrong again today. Despite what our opposition suggests, this bill is a legitimate need. It effectively walks a line between acknowledging differences between ophthalmology and optometry while also acknowledging the regulatory board established by this legislative body is equipped to monitor these advancements in place of constant revisions to our law. Optometrists are safely and successfully performing these procedures all over the country. Optometrists are effectively and adequately trained to perform these procedures and are regulated by boards established within legislative bodies such as this one. House bill 1963 clearly defines what procedures we are not allowed to do. These procedures are outside the definition of optometric care and are safely within the realm of ophthalmology. It is my hope that this approach redefines the endless narrative of conflict between optometry and ophthalmology into a more reasonable discourse. I would argue that a clearly defined boundary encourages a more collegial and cooperative environment for collaboration within the two professions. The procedures this language permits are highly specific and well within the boundaries of optometric training and education. Innovations in education, training and technology should expand the opportunity for Missouri residents to receive quality care in an efficient, safe and judicious manner. You have in your packets an itemized list of what this bill would allow us to do and what it will not allow. Please do not allow the gridlock of infighting and misinformation to stagnate progress. Our patients deserve more. Thank you for your time and attention and I am available to answer any questions you may have. Sincerely, Jeffrey M. Gamble, OD



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>MARK D. CURTIS, O.D.</b>		PHONE NUMBER:
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EMAIL: <b>mdcurtis2020@gmail.com</b>	ATTENDANCE: <b>In-Person</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>2/13/2024 10:42 AM</b>

**THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.**

February 12, 2024 Thank you, Chairman Coleman and the members of this committee, for allowing me to talk to you today in support of HB 1963, the Optometry Modernization Bill. My name is Dr. Mark Curtis. I have practiced optometry in Warrensburg for 28 years. I'm going to present the backdrop and a 80,000 foot view of this bill. First....what's the difference between an optometrists and ophthalmologists? Both professions start with an undergraduate degree, usually in biology or a pre-professional degree. After undergrad, an optometrist then has 4-years of education and training specific to the care of vision and eyes. Some optometrist will continue their education with a residency to specialize in pediatrics, low vision or ocular disease. After undergrad, an ophthalmologist will spend 4-years in medical school, followed by a residency specific to eye vision and eye surgery. Most ophthalmologists will continue their education with a fellowship in a specific specialty such as cataract surgery, cornea disease or retina disease. The goal for both professions is the same. To preserve and protect the vision and eye health of our patients. We work together in this effort. Many of the procedures, tests and treatments we do are identical. But, our professions are regulated differently. Optometry is a legislated profession, meaning our scope of practice is different state-to-state. As you know, advancements in medical care has changed at a whirlwind pace. Eyecare is no different, yet Missouri optometrists scope of practice was last modernized 30 years ago. The in-office laser procedures that are in this bill have been performed over 100,000 times by optometrists in 9 states, including 3 that border Missouri. The in-office injection procedures are allowed in 41 states already. Missouri is falling behind with modern eyecare. You are going to hear testimony from several doctors today. Many support this bill. Some do not. You are going to hear testimony from an optometrist that explains what in-office procedures are in this bill and what surgery room procedures are not. You are going to hear from a current optometry student at our own University of Missouri-St. Louis. He will share data and concerns about Missouri losing good doctors to other states with a more modern scope. You will hear from a current professor from UMSL about the education, training and certification process that has been in place for many years. One of the more interesting testimonies you will hear is from one the dual licensed optometrists that are in the room today. They now practice in Missouri, but perform these procedures when they practice in Arkansas and Oklahoma. Not all ophthalmologists are opposed to this legislation. In your packet, there is a letter from Dr. Dan Osborne, an ophthalmologists at the Missouri Eye Institute based out of Springfield, MO. His letter supports House Bill 1963. He believes that optometrists are trained to do these procedures and that access to timely, healthy quality care is limited by the current optometry scope of practice. The doctors who will testify against this bill may argue that optometrists aren't qualified to do these procedures and that we want to simply take a 32-hour weekend class to become certified. That simply is not true. Optometry school is 10,000 hours of eye specific education and training. The required education and training for these procedures is already included for every optometry school in the US.

Licensed optometrists already do continuing education on a wide range of advancements. You may also hear that patients aren't having to wait for these procedures and that appointments are readily available across the state for the procedures. That simply is not true either. I live in rural Missouri and many patients wait weeks and months to see an ophthalmologist. You will hear that most patients are within 30-45 miles of an ophthalmologist. Our point is why make a patient wait and drive to have a procedure done by their already trained optometrist. I appreciate the time I've been given. Thank you very much. Mark D. Curtis, O.D.



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>MATTHEW K SCULLAWL</b>		PHONE NUMBER:
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ADDRESS:		
CITY:	STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: <b>drkory@myvisionclinic.com</b>	ATTENDANCE: <b>In-Person</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>2/13/2024 10:58 AM</b>

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Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Dr. Kory Scullawl...I am not a native of Missouri. I grew up in Oklahoma where I eventually went to the Oklahoma College of Optometry obtaining my Doctor of Optometry degree and an Oklahoma license which I still hold to this day. In my training, I was taught to perform the procedures in this bill. Oklahoma has done the procedures in this bill and more since 1997. Notably a portion of my training was in a collaborative OD/MD multi-scope practice. In fact the center I trained in also housed an Ophthalmology residency. Do you know who taught the resident Ophthalmologist how to perform Yag laser procedures after cataract surgery? The 3 practicing Optometrist did, because the Ophthalmologist residency director knew we were trained well to do them and could pass that knowledge on. It was a collaborative relationship where we learned from each other which is what patient care should be. Don't subscribe to this notion that we are not trained properly. We took semester long classes on how the lasers were made....not just operated. I have safely performed these procedures in a private practice of Optometry where we owned a YAG laser, providing access to our patients. In 2006 I decided to help open a refractive surgery center in Springfield. The minute I crossed the border I was no longer "qualified" to perform the procedures I have been doing for 4 years. In this office, I worked directly with Ophthalmology that would perform out of town surgery then leave and I would assume care. Again it was a collaborative model. I also worked at a similar surgery center in Joplin where I would like to point out some of our patients would have to pay for facility fees in addition to the surgeon fees for after cataract laser procedures. We could refer patients to Miami, OK 30 min away, where 2 optometrist would perform the procedure in office for the surgeons fee only, saving the patients a significant amount of money. Especially patients without insurance...this was their only option. I never intended to stay in Missouri but I fell in love with Springfield, and I met my wife who graduated from Missouri State. It was a tough decision to not move back to Oklahoma or Arkansas from a practice standpoint, but I will never leave Southwest, Missouri. I am currently a partner in a group practice with 5 locations, 13 doctors and 90 employees. We provide around 30,000 eye exams per year to Southwest missourians. . Our doctors take our profession and patient care very seriously. We would never do anything beyond our skill set or comfort level. Even now we will refer patients to other areas of specialty in our office. Just as we refer to Ophthalmology for care. We can provide safe, effective care to our patient base. In summary the state of Oklahoma trusts me to do these procedures safely and they have been doing so since 1997. Interestingly, My malpractice insurance premiums didn't change. For this reason, we support this bill, and ask for your support to move this bill out of committee. Thank you Mr. Chairman and committe members. Dr. M. Kory Scullawl



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>NICHOLAS WHITESIDES</b>		PHONE NUMBER:
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CITY:	STATE:	ZIP:
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**TESTIMONY OF NICHOLAS WHITESIDES, STUDENT LIAISON MISSOURI OPTOMETRY STUDENT ASSOCIATION HB 1963 CONCERNING PRACTICE OF OPTOMETRY**

My name is Nicholas Whitesides and I am both the Student Liaison to the Missouri Optometry Association and the President of the Missouri Optometry Student Association, representing the interests of 169 students at the University of Missouri -St. Louis College of Optometry. Our two organizations have a strong connection with the goal of promoting... “the advancement of optometry by advocating for and educating its members; and protecting access to the highest quality eye and vision care for the citizens of Missouri “ per the MOA website. The Missouri Optometry Association strongly urges you to support House Bill 1963, An Act Concerning Practice of Optometry, sponsored by Representative Alex Riley. As a student who is both searching for employment and preparing to take the first of three separate boards exams next month, the passing of this bill is very influential in my decision-making process on where I will spend my career. I can say the same for many of my classmates according to a recent poll of all 42 of them. Of the 18th Missouri residents, 14 said they would consider employment in another state if they would not be able to practice to the fullest extent of their knowledge and capabilities. When the other 25 non-Missouri residents were asked if they would consider staying in Missouri after school if they were able to practice to the fullest extent of their knowledge and capabilities, 15 said yes. The passage of this bill is critical to attracting and keeping young doctors here in Missouri and to secure the future of eyecare, as it would make us feel respected and valued. As the population grows and ages it is important to make your optometry students feel respected and valued so that we might stay and serve the citizens of this state, especially since we know that our knowledge and skills are recognized in surrounding states. Being able to treat my patients with lump/bump removal around the eye and non-invasive laser procedures for both glaucoma and removing secondary cataracts would only benefit patients, especially for those that live hours away from the nearest ophthalmologist. HB 1963 therefore should be passed. Thank you for your consideration of the views of the Missouri Optometry Student Association. Sincerely, Nicholas Whitesides, Missouri Optometry Student Association President



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>THOMAS GREENE</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>573-353-0651</b>	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: <b>MISSOURI OPTOMETRIC ASSOCIATION</b>		TITLE: <b>OPTOMETRIST</b>	
ADDRESS: <b>100 E. HIGH STREET #301</b>			
CITY: <b>JEFFERSON CITY</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>	ZIP: <b>65101</b>
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>REGISTERED LOBBYIST:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>BRIAN BERNSKOETTER</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>573-636-2822</b>	
REPRESENTING: <b>MISSOURI ACADEMY OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS</b>		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: <b>101 EAST HIGH</b>			
CITY: <b>JEFFERSON CITY</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>	ZIP: <b>65102</b>
EMAIL: <b>brianb@swllc.us.com</b>	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>2/13/2024 1:56 PM</b>	
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>BRIAN BOWLES</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>573-634-3415</b>
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: <b>MISSOURI ASSOCIATION OF OSTEOPATHIC PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS</b>		TITLE: <b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>
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EMAIL: <b>brianb@maops.org</b>	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>2/13/2024 7:48 AM</b>

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The Missouri Association of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons (MAOPS) opposes HB 1963 Regarding the Practice of Optometry. Optometrists The bill outlines specific procedures that optometrists cannot perform. However, this leaves the door open to many other procedures for which they may or may not be adequately trained to perform that are NOT included on the list. This would also include procedures that have yet to be developed. Technically, each time a new procedure was developed, statute would have to be changed to ensure they were added to the lists of procedures that they could not perform. Additionally, MAOPS is concerned that the standard of care for various procedures will be different for optometrists versus physicians, specifically ophthalmologists. This is not only a patient safety issue, but a patient expectation issue. Optometry and ophthalmology are not the same disciplines, nor or they trained in the same manner or to the same level. Optometrists complete 4 years of optometry school and are not required to complete a residency program. Ophthalmologists complete four years of medical school and complete 3-5 years of postgraduate residency and fellowship in the specific discipline of ophthalmology. Optometrists are licensed in Missouri by the Board of Optometry composed of optometrists and ophthalmologists are licensed by the Board of Healing Arts composed of physicians. Due to the different training and the fact that they are overseen by different boards composed of members of the respective professions, there is the very real potential that the quality and standards of care each is held to by their professions could be different, resulting in patient care of differing qualities as well. Patients not only expect the same quality of care, they expect the highest quality of care, and it is vital that the legislature ensure that any legislation passed assures patients of this. HB 1963 does not do this.



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>HARITA ABRAHAM</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
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ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:		SUBMIT DATE: <b>2/13/2024 12:00 AM</b>
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>JAMES LUETKEMEYER, M.D.</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>573-230-4657</b>	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: <b>MISSOURI STATE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION</b>		TITLE: <b>PHYSICIAN</b>	
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CITY: <b>JEFFERSON CITY</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>	ZIP: <b>65101</b>
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>JONATHAN TOVEY, M.D.</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>816-478-1230</b>
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: <b>MISSOURI SOCIETY OF EYE PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS</b>		TITLE: <b>PHYSICIAN</b>
ADDRESS: <b>425 NORTHWEST MURRAY ROAD</b>		
CITY: <b>LEES SUMMIT</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>
		ZIP: <b>64081</b>
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>NICHOLAS KOH BAUGNON</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>PHILIP WILSON, DO</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
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