

To: Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

From: Kathleen Holthaus, OD

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RE: Senate Bill 490

My name is Dr. Kathleen Holthaus. I am an optometrist practicing in Wichita, Kansas. I am testifying today in support of Senate Bill 490.

As a 2019 graduate of the Northeastern State University Oklahoma College of Optometry, I was trained and educated on the procedures outlined in this bill. As part of my clinical training, I also performed these procedures on live patients. I am unable to perform these procedures in Kansas due to limitations in our scope of practice.

You will hear arguments against scope modernization and that optometrists are neither trained to perform these procedures safely for Kansas patients nor are they able to deliver quality care. One procedure that is mentioned is a Nd:YAG laser capsulotomy. I was part of a peer reviewed, prospective research study published in 2023 that evaluated the effectiveness and outcomes of Nd:YAG laser capsulotomy procedures performed by optometrists. Ninety-two eyes of 79 subjects completed one month of follow up and 81 eyes of 69 patients completed three months of follow up. Patients' vision was assessed objectively and subjectively at follow up and multiple different complications were measured.

The results of this study indicate an overall improvement in patients' visual acuity both objectively and subjectively. Each doctor of optometry took the necessary precautions when performing the capsulotomy and appropriately managed the patient's outcomes. No significant adverse events were noted in any subject. The average amount of energy used during the procedure and visual outcome was similar to other Nd:YAG capsulotomy studies, 19 of which were quoted in our research. The number of participants in our study was equal to or greater than the majority of the recently published studies cited. Our study demonstrates that capsulotomies can be effectively and safely performed by doctors of optometry with minimal risk and significant visual benefit to patients. It also provides evidence to support the use of Nd:YAG capsulotomy in optometric practice.

As an optometrist, I want to provide the very best level of care for my patients. Unnecessarily limiting my scope of practice because another provider type believes I can't provide the same level of care on procedures that I am educated, trained and certified on is not in the best interest of my patients.

I encourage you to support SB 490 and pass it favorably out of committee.