

February 20, 2024

TO: Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

From: Kendra Lowell

RE: SB 490

Good morning,

My name is Kendra Lowell. I grew up in Belleville, KS and am currently a fourth year optometry student at the Oklahoma College of Optometry at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah. I will be graduating in about two months and will be returning to the state to provide comprehensive eye care at a practice in north central Kansas. I am here to ask for a "yes" vote for senate bill 490 to modernize the scope of practice for optometrists in Kansas.

Over the normal course of optometry school I was trained and already have performed all of the proposed procedures included in SB 490 including laser procedures, injections, and removal of and biopsy of skin lesions. Our classes first prepare us with supervised simulations of these procedures and upon completion we have supervised clinical experience on real patients. With 11 states currently already having legislation that allows optometrists to perform laser procedures, and 8 more being introduced to legislation in 2024, our state will have an increased difficulty recruiting new doctors to Kansas. A survey was conducted from Kansas students currently in optometry school, and 90% voted that scope of practice is a significant factor when it comes to deciding whether they will return to Kansas. I know of at least one classmate who is from Kansas that is specifically not coming back to practice here due to a wider scope available in a different state.

Being from a rural Kansas area, I understand the challenges people face to access healthcare - especially the elderly. From personal experience, my grandma travels 1 hour and 40 minutes into Nebraska, as this is the closest access to the laser procedure that she needs. For her, this travel distance and crossing state lines would be the same for every procedure included in SB490. If she lived further west in the state the distance could possibly be even greater. I am confident that the passing of Senate Bill 490 would help patients' access to closer care for so many Kansas residents.

Senate Bill 490 would not only allow better access of healthcare to these rural areas, it could also allow for revenue produced from the procedure to stay within our state. With your help, highly trained optometrists can broaden the healthcare system and improve the quality of eyecare available in Kansas by including these much needed procedures within their scope.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

[kendrascott528@yahoo.com](mailto:kendrascott528@yahoo.com)

913-827-8087