



ILLINOIS  
DERMATOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY

February 26, 2016

The Honorable Pamela Althoff  
Illinois State Senate  
309L State Capitol  
Springfield, IL 62706

The Honorable Anna Moeller  
Illinois House of Representatives  
249-E Stratton Office Building  
Springfield, IL 62706

Re: SB 2899 and HB 6166

Dear Senator Althoff and Representative Moeller:

We respectfully seek your support for protecting Illinois' citizens from injuries to their eyes.

Specifically the Illinois Dermatological Society urges you to retain current Illinois legislation that prohibits optometrists from performing surgical procedures around a patient's eyes and injecting substances in or around a patient's eyes, or elsewhere. Language contained in the Illinois optometry practice act sunset bill would allow optometrists (who are not medical doctors, that is, physicians) to perform surgical procedures. Illinois optometrists presently fit eyeglasses and contacts and are allowed to treat some eye diseases. They do not (and should not) perform surgical procedures.

The Illinois Dermatological Society believes surgery should be performed only by physicians who have been extensively trained through medical school, internship and residency. Optometrists attend only four years of school at an optometry college. In comparison, physicians (surgeons) – whether dermatologists or ophthalmologists – attend four post-graduate years of medical school, half of which involves clinical rotations. Then they complete an intensive year of hospital-based medical internship before three years of residency training in their specialty. The resident is responsible for managing thousands of patients (under supervision of attending physician faculty) and, for surgical specialties, also performing hundreds of surgical procedures. Many go on to one or two years of additional fellowship training in a specific aspect of their specialty.

According to the National Consumer's League, 30% of consumers don't know the difference between optometrists and ophthalmologists, who both wear white coats and call themselves "doctors." So it's not surprising that an AMA survey of 850 U.S. adults in 2010 found that 54% erroneously believe optometrists are medical doctors. The National Consumer's League survey revealed that 95% of consumers want eye-related surgery performed by physicians. Ophthalmologists are physicians; optometrists are *not*.

Some optometrists may want to expand the scope of their practices to include surgical procedures. Very few states actually permit this risky policy, and Illinois should not be one of them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Amy Derick MD'.

Amy J. Derick, MD  
*President*