

FY 2016-2017 Budget Testimony

Before the Finance – Corrections Subcommittee



Ohio State Board of Optometry

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CORRECTIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

FISCAL YEARS 2016-2017 BUDGET TESTIMONY

Chairman Uecker and members of the Corrections Subcommittee, my name is Jeff Greene, Executive Director of the State Board of Optometry. Thank you for the opportunity to present the Board's fiscal year 2016-17 Executive Budget Recommendations.

The Ohio State Board of Optometry was formed in 1919 and has been serving the public and its licensees since that time. The Board of Optometry strives to provide the most effective and efficient level of service possible for both the public and the regulated licensees. Our mission is to ensure professionally competent optometrists by regulating examinations and licensure, enforcing continuing education compliance, monitoring continuing education quality and licensure renewal. We are able to accomplish this through the enforcement of the Ohio Revised Code Chapter 4725 and the associated administrative code. The Board is also dedicated to handling public concerns in a timely fashion and providing prompt, friendly service to all customers. The Board is self-sustaining through licensure and renewal fees and does not require money from the general revenue fund to complete our responsibilities.

The Board is appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, and consists of five persons who are actually engaged in the practice of optometry and one member of the public. The staff consists of three full-time employees responsible for conducting the daily administrative functions of the Board. The Board staff is proud of the fact that when anyone calls the office a real person answers the phone. We are a small staffed office, but continually receive praise from the public and our licensees on the measure of service they receive. The Board is required to hold a minimum of four meetings annually which are utilized to publicly conduct the Board's responsibilities. These activities include issuance of licenses, approval of continuing education sponsors, review reports of drug-related side effects and complaint investigations, approve all related administrative functions and conduct disciplinary hearings.

The Board has over 2,200 licensed optometrists who must renew their license on an annual basis. All licensed optometrists must complete 25 hours of continuing education each year for license renewal. The Board staff audits 100% of their continuing education and ensures compliance by all licensees.

In response to the Governor's Executive Order 2013-05K, Streamlining the Occupational Licensing Process for Veterans, the Board approved two new rules, which expedite the application process when possible for veterans and their spouses.

We also worked closely with the Ohio Optometric Association, their lobbyist and the Pharmacy Board to address the rescheduling of Hydrocodone from a Schedule III controlled substance to a Schedule II and the scheduling of Tramadol to Schedule IV. Language was passed to address the rescheduling and ensure that Ohio licensed optometrists continue to maintain their level of prescribing.

Over the past year, we completed our mandated 5 year rule review, carefully examining and evaluating every rule to see if any changes were needed. Several small changes were made after review from the Common Sense Initiative Office.

The Board is responsible for approving continuing education programs that are presented by other entities within the state. During 2014, a total of 218 programs were submitted and approved by the Board. The process requires a staff person review the application and all related materials, determine if the request meets the mandated requirements and then communicate back to the education sponsor with a letter of approval.

Our one investigator has the responsibility to investigate citizen complaints, complete random on-site inspections, conduct training sessions for newly licensed optometrists and serve as a resource of answering office inquiries. The investigator completed 37 on-site inspections, initiated over 42 investigations and conducted 77 laws and rules presentations during 2014. He also completed laws and rules training to the graduating class at the Ohio State University College of Optometry.

The Board is extremely proud of the professional and positive relationship it shares with the Ohio Optometric Association, the Ohio State University College of Optometry, the Ohio Ophthalmological Society and the Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry. Ohio optometrists provide nearly 100% of underprivileged eye care to the public and have the lowest professional liability claims for malpractice.

The Board and staff continue to be fiscally conservative and will strive to do the same in the upcoming budget. We realize the importance of working within the means provided and plan to continue to reduce costs where feasible without diminishing service to the public and our licensees.

We are a small Board and staff, but we provide full-service to our licensees and the public by being pro-active in servicing the primary eye care needs of the citizens of Ohio.

Thank you for your support and consideration for the funding recommendations contained in the Executive Budget. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have at this time.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey W. Greene

Executive Director