



Senators Jerry Cirino & George Lang
Senate Bill 36
Sponsor Testimony
Senate Health Committee
April 2, 2025

Senator Cirino:

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Liston and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony alongside my joint sponsor Senator Lang, on Senate Bill 36: The Primary Eye Care Modernization Act.

Senate Bill 36 is measured, common-sense legislation that seeks to make incremental changes and update the scope of practice of Ohio's optometrists and will be the first update in 17 years.

The safety of all patients is a top priority just as I know patient safety is the utmost priority of Ohio's optometrists.

Importantly, **SB 36 does nothing to compromise the safety of patients in our communities. Neither Senator Lang nor I would put our names on legislation that could compromise the health of our constituents.** In addition, Ohio's trusted

optometrists would never ask the Ohio General Assembly to grant them the right to perform procedures for which they were not properly trained and educated.

Senate Bill 36 is a product of several years of intense internal discussions among the members of the Ohio Optometric Association (OOA). The need for this legislation came through many comments from patients to their optometrists, whom they have known in their communities throughout Ohio, that those educated doctors could not already do the procedures contained in SB 36. The bill also reduces unnecessary statutory and administrative red tape that only delay needed vision care.

In the past, this General Assembly has shown great trust in Ohio's optometrists for quality, cost-effective vision care, whether it be expanding the profession's capabilities to better treat patients, the creation and funding of a vision care program to serve Ohio children in underserved areas or through the strong willingness to deliver care **responsibly** to Ohio's Medicaid population.

I would like to remind the committee that in the two previous successful legislative initiatives that expanded vision care for optometrists in Ohio, not one component of either of those bills has been repealed due to quality-of-care issues.

When considering the many benefits to patients contained in SB 36, I feel it is important to also note what my legislation does not do. In SB 36, optometrists are NOT asking to perform LASIK or Cataract eye surgery, perform operating room procedures,

make changes to current opioid prescribing standards or alter the “team-based” approach to delivering vision care. The legislation would permit optometrists to do certain in-office, non-invasive laser procedures and other basic procedures such as the removal of benign lesions like cysts, styes and skin tags. SB 36 would also update certain pharmaceutical regulations from 2008 to focus the ability of optometrists to use specific pharmaceuticals for treatment of the condition of the eye. It is my understanding that the Ohio Board of Pharmacy has no objection to this language that is contained in SB 36.

Senator Lang:

In addition to the improvements Senator Cirino mentioned, Senate Bill 36 will also help Ohio maintain a strong, well-trained eyecare workforce. In Ohio, we are lucky to have one of the top-ranked colleges of Optometry in the nation at The Ohio State University. However, because our state’s scope of practice has not evolved in 17 years to reflect this level of training, Ohio is at a disadvantage in attracting and potentially retaining the best and brightest young optometrists. Other states, such as our neighbors in Kentucky, Indiana and West Virginia along with Colorado, North Carolina and Oklahoma, already allow optometrists to perform many of the enhanced procedures contained in Senate Bill 36.

12 states already allow optometrists to use lasers while 22 states permit optometrists to perform lid lesion procedures

such as the ones contained in SB 36. If our state is truly “open for business” and is committed to attracting and retaining the best and brightest, I believe it is critical to move this legislation forward.

The fact of the matter is that optometry is a regulated profession under the Ohio Revised Code and these professions must come before the General Assembly on occasion to seek changes in their scopes of practice that reflect the evolution of health care itself and the changes in training and education.

Senate Bill 36 will not only accomplish this, but it will modernize the scope of the role of optometrists, continue to provide quality, cost-effective vision care for patients in Ohio, and push Ohio one step closer to being the most business-friendly state in the country.

I applaud the members of the Ohio Optometric Association for their thoughtful input and offering Senator Cirino and a measured, common-sense proposal, and I am happy to answer any questions the members of the committee may have.