



**Ohio Senate Health Committee
Ohio Vision Professionals Board
Budget Recommendations for
SFY 2026/2027 Testimony
Anne Gonzales, Executive Director
May 7, 2025**

Good morning, Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Liston and members of the Ohio Senate Health Committee. My name is Anne Gonzales, Executive Director of the Ohio Vision Professionals Board. I truly appreciate the opportunity to provide an overview of the Ohio Vision Professionals Board (VPB) and our budget recommendations.

The Ohio Vision Professionals Board came into existence on January 21, 2018. House Bill 49 of the 132nd General Assembly consolidated the State Board of Optometry and the Optical Dispensers Board into the Vision Professionals Board. It achieved administrative efficiencies and regulatory functions. The Board currently licenses and regulates over 7,000 optometrists, opticians, and apprentice opticians. VPB monitors compliance with continuing education requirements, approves provider program relevance to practice in Ohio and educates the licensees on the laws and rules which govern licensees and consumers on services provided by the licensees. The Board is comprised of four (4) optometrists, two (2) opticians and one (1) public member. The Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, appoints members to three-year (3) terms.

The mission of the Ohio VPB is to provide statewide leadership in protecting and serving Ohioans by effectively and efficiently regulating the practices of optometrists, opticians, and apprentices.

Below are some of the accomplishments during the 2024/2025 biennium:

- Implemented changes for renewals from annual to biennial as a result of HB 509.
- Implemented new universal reciprocity provision included in SB131 to ensure individuals licensed in another state have licensure in Ohio.
- Updated rules relating to the Licensure of Ocularists. Review of rules pursuant to the 5-year review policy.
- Continued regular communications with licensees and members via the Vision Professionals Board's website and E-Newsletters
- Continue to participate in the Safe Haven Program to offer support for practitioners working through mental health and substance use disorders.



The VPB has standards of conduct for our licensees / registrants and internally handles all the investigations of all complaints against our licensed professionals for compliance with the applicable laws, rules, and regulations. We strive to be a national leader for the establishment of professional practice standards and licensure of those professions.

The VPB employs an executive director, an investigator and two administrative personnel. The staff fulfills numerous duties to make certain that the citizens of the state of Ohio receive care from qualified optometrists and opticians. Those duties include licensing optometrists, opticians, and registering apprentices, investigating complaints, compliance initiatives, and monitoring, clarifying laws and rules, administrative rule filings, legislative activities, fulfilling public records requests, and several administrative functions.

The Executive Budget proposal for the VPB is \$609,659 for FY2026 and \$668,146 for FY2027 for the biennium. The Board believes that the funding recommendation proposed will permit the Board to maintain its current level of service and fulfill its mission to the great citizens of Ohio.

In closing, I appreciate the opportunity to present the Ohio Vision Professionals Board's executive budget proposal to you today. The VPB has an enormous responsibility to act in the best interest in protecting and serving Ohioans with educated and ethical eye care professionals with the highest levels of accountability. The VPB respectfully requests your support with an open and collaborative process with budget deliberations. I thank the committee for their time and attention and welcome your questions and comments.