

Senate Bill 36

Written Testimony of William Hileman, O.D.

April 14, 2025

To the Honorable Members of the Ohio Senate Health Committee,

I am William Hileman, O.D., an Optometrist at the Chillicothe VA Medical Center in Chillicothe, Ohio. I graduated from the Illinois College of Optometry in 2007 and completed my residency training from 2007-2008 at the Chillicothe VA Medical Center and the VA Central Ohio Health Care System in Columbus. Over the past 18 years, I have had the privilege of serving our nation's veterans while working at the Veteran's Health Administration in Ohio. I appreciate the opportunity to express my support for SB 36.

SB 36 aims to expand the scope of Optometrists in Ohio, enabling them to perform specific laser procedures and minor procedures. Currently, Optometrists are being trained in these procedures in school, and courses are available for other providers to acquire these skills. In July 2022, I attended the Northeastern State University College of Optometry Laser Therapy for the Anterior Segment and Surgical Procedures for the Optometric Physician course. This course builds upon the skills Optometrists use in everyday practice to teach the nuances of anterior segment laser procedures and other minor procedures.

In my role, I have the opportunity to work in a relatively underserved medical region in southeastern Ohio, with our catchment area spanning from Cambridge to Marietta to Portsmouth and over to Wilmington. I witness firsthand the daily burden on underserved residents of Ohio who must travel long distances for healthcare. This burden is exacerbated in areas with higher poverty levels, where the challenge of travel is even more daunting. Prioritizing healthcare when travel is necessary is difficult to balance with other basic needs. Currently, residents must travel to Ophthalmologists to receive these basic procedures, which are not always available regionally, and residents may not have access to prompt care.

I had the privilege of being one of the first Optometrists to perform anterior ocular segment lasers at the VA and in the State of Ohio at the Chillicothe VA Medical Center. To do so, I underwent a rigorous vetting process to be credentialed and privileged to perform these procedures at our facility. This involved ensuring that I received proper training to perform

these procedures at our VA facility. We implemented multiple safety measures to ensure good outcomes and the safety of our veterans. During the timeframe that the VA allowed Optometrists to complete laser procedures, our facility performed dozens of lasers. Multiple professional groups conducted reviews and inquiries regarding our laser procedures, and the results confirmed our primary goals of achieving good patient outcomes while providing exceptionally safe care to our veterans. This example, along with countless others from different areas, demonstrates that Optometrists are more than capable of providing advanced optometric procedures safely.

I appreciate your time and attention to SB 36 and your commitment to providing improved healthcare options to the most vulnerable residents of the State of Ohio.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Hileman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

William Hileman, O.D