

Opponent Testimony - S.B. 36
Aleksandra Rachitskaya, MD - Ohio Ophthalmological Society
Senate Health Committee
October 22, 2025

Chairman Huffman, Vice-Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Liston and members of the Senate Health Committee, my name is Aleksandra Rachitskaya. I am an ophthalmologist practicing in Cleveland, Ohio. I am here today representing the views of the Ohio Ophthalmological Society (OOS) in my capacity as its current President.

In testimony last week the proponents articulated how the OOS, the OSMA and in general organized medicine have not proposed constructive language or specific recommendations to address the issues raised in SB 36.

As president of the OOS and someone that works collaboratively with optometrists every day to take care of patients, I can tell you such an assertion is not true. Indeed, we are adamantly opposed to the proposed language related to surgery and injections for reasons that were just outlined by my colleagues. That said, there are many areas of commonality related to improving practice efficiency, collaboration, patient compliance, access to care and work force.

Let me outline some excellent opportunities that we have to work collaboratively to advance and improve health delivery systems in different parts of the state.

Specifically in this year's budget, the legislature created and funded the OhioSee program. The Ohio Department of Health has already issued the first request for proposals for grants that it will fund in 2026. With this funding, the OhioSee program will build off innovative work led by ophthalmology in northeastern Ohio and optometry in southeastern and southwestern Ohio to address the challenge of getting children in certain areas appropriate eye care. Lack of eyecare in children can affect learning and have dire long-term consequences. Expanding these programs efficiently and effectively across the state will result in major improvements that will benefit Ohio today and for decades to come.

Diabetes in the eye can be a blinding condition. Ohio is one of a few states to focus on increasing screening for diabetic eye disease or diabetic retinopathy particularly in underserved communities which might be disproportionately affected by this serious eye condition and lack access to care. This work is being led in Ohio by the National Kidney Foundation, Prevent Blindness Ohio and the Ohio Department of Health. This is another great opportunity for a collaborative approach between optometry and ophthalmology to significantly improve outcomes and create greater health equity in our state.

In the 2023 budget, at the urging of optometry and organized medicine, you and your colleagues graciously increased Medicaid funding for vision services that has and will continue to benefit practices that once again serve some of Ohio's most vulnerable populations. And in 2022, at the request of the Ohio Optometric Association, we remained neutral as optometry rewrote their licensure requirements to ease the administrative burden that positively impacted every licensed optometrist in the state.

In summary, we believe that SB 36 as drafted is a solution looking for a problem. It will not have any significant impact on the eye health delivery system in Ohio nor address healthcare workforce challenges. Rather than pursue divisive scope of practice legislation presented in

SB 36, we believe there is a great opportunity for ophthalmology, optometry and policy makers to continue to work together to address significant needs in eye healthcare in Ohio, such as helping Ohio children and our most vulnerable populations. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony to SB 36. The members of our panel will be happy to answer any questions you might have.