



**Substitute House Bill 49-Operating Budget
Opponent Testimony
State Vision Professionals Board-Section 4725.03**

Chairman Oelslager, Vice-Chairwoman Manning, Ranking Member Skindell and members of the Senate Finance Committee, my name is Mark Glasper and I am the Executive Director of the Opticians Association of Ohio, the professional association for over 5,000 licensed opticians and apprentices in Ohio.

You have heard from opticians throughout the state opposing the provision in the budget bill to abolish the Ohio Optical Dispensers Board and the State Board of Optometry and combine the regulation of opticians and optometrists into a State Vision Professionals Board. You have heard that despite the fact that there are only 2,500 optometrists in Ohio compared to 5,000 opticians and apprentices, the bill gives majority control to optometrists on the new Vision Board with a composition of 4 optometrists, 2 opticians and 1 public member. You have also heard that optometrists and opticians are **direct competitors** in the marketplace for the sale of prescription eyewear and that giving optometrists regulatory control over opticians will result in an **anti-competitive** business environment in Ohio and will ultimately drive up the price of prescription eyewear for Ohio consumers.

However, despite these arguments, the substitute bill before you still combines opticians and optometrists into a Vision Board with optometry control. Independent opticians who own their optical practices and compete with optometrists for the sale of prescription eyewear see this as the start of losing their business. Opticians also working for large retail businesses that directly compete with private optometry practices also fear how their jobs will be impacted as optometrists will now control how they practice in these settings. ***It is ironic that the purported goal of consolidation is to ensure that one profession does not dominate the marketplace and create an anti-competitive environment but this is exactly what will occur in giving optometry control over its optician competitors.***

If you cannot support restoring the current working system of two separate boards regulating the two professions, we respectfully request that you modify the composition of the Vision Board to **add two opticians** so that there is an **equal** number of opticians and optometrists. At a minimum, it is critical that the two opticians specified in the bill for the Vision Board have a **dual license in spectacle and contact lens dispensing**. Without this, it is likely that the Vision Board will have no representation for dually licensed opticians. ***Further, it is equally critical that at least one optician specified on the Vision Board have majority control of an optical business.*** Unless independent opticians are represented on the Vision Board, you may find optometrists advocating for optician employees to be Board members, resulting in a void for the voice of independent optician business owners.

Opticians throughout Ohio urge you to restore fairness and competitiveness by reinstating the Optical Dispensers Board as the Board to regulate opticians. The public will be best served and protected by separate regulation of optometrists and opticians. ***In the alternative, we ask for equal representation to optometry on the Vision Board and request at a minimum that the two opticians specified in the bill hold dual licensure in spectacle and contact lens dispensing and at least one hold a majority interest in a retail optical business.*** Thank you for your consideration.