

2019 Optometry Scope of Practice Legislation

The Problem: Outdated and restrictive scope of practice laws deny citizens access to quality and cost effective primary eye care services. In the four main scope of practice areas covered by this legislation, Maryland's current law is one of the most restrictive in the country.

The Solution: Modernizing the Optometry scope of practice will improve patient access to primary eye care, reduce health care costs and improve patient outcomes for *all* Marylanders.

The Legislation: This bill would sensibly expand the scope of practice of Optometry in four specific areas: (1) prescription authority; (2) disease management; (3) foreign body removal; and (4) diagnostic testing authority.

Prescription Authority

- Authorizes Optometrists to administer and prescribe oral and topical therapeutic pharmaceutical agents, devices and therapies appropriate for the management of ocular diseases and conditions. *Excludes all controlled dangerous substances.*
- Under current law, Maryland's Rx authority is one of the most restrictive in the country.

Disease Management

- Authorizes Optometrists to independently treat diseases of the eye that they are educated and trained to manage, including glaucoma.
- Under current law, Maryland is the *only* state that requires an optometrist to permanently co-manage glaucoma patients with an ophthalmologist, regardless of disease progression.

Foreign Body Removal

- Authorizes Optometrists to remove a foreign body anywhere on the eye, using any appropriate instrument *except a scalpel*, providing the object has not penetrated the mid-stroma.
- Under current law Optometrists are unable to care for most patients with a foreign body embedded in their eye due to restrictions related to object location and limits on the use of any tool other than a "Q-tip or blunt spatula." *These restrictions are the most limiting in the nation.*

Diagnostic Testing

- Authorizes Optometrists to order necessary blood, culture and image tests vital to the diagnosis, treatment and management of diseases and conditions that affect the visual system.
- Under current law Optometrists are unable to order these necessary tests. Maryland's diagnostic test authority is one of the most restrictive in the country.

The Benefits of Expanding the Scope of Practice of Optometry:

- Optometry plays a critical role in preventative medicine.
- Improved patient health outcomes and continuity of care.
- Patient and insurer cost savings.

Accessible, quality, cost effective care demands health care services be delivered at the right place at the right time!

