

Kathryn Brandt
Gardiner
LD 1803

Dear Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services:

My name is Kathryn Brandt, DO, MS. I am a family physician residing Gardiner, Maine and working as Chair of Primary Care at the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine and President Elect of the Maine Osteopathic Association. I am representing myself, writing in opposition to “LD 1803 – An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Optometric Practice.” I am most particularly concerned regarding the clause Sec. 5. 32 MRSA §19201-A allowing the Board of Optometry, of whom no members have surgical expertise, are authorized to make future decisions regarding surgical scope of optometrists.

In addition, the prescribing of hydrocodone and prednisone are concerning in they are medications that have significant side effects and interactions with other medications. As with other opioid medications, hydrocodone is at risk of diversion, misuse, and addiction. We are currently in a crisis of addiction, and having a group outside the restrictions and extensive monitoring in place for medical clinicians risks worsening the situation. In my own practice, I have seen issues in a similar context when dentists prescribe too many opioid medications and patients come to me in distress around addiction or having had their medications stolen. Prednisone is a medication with many side effects including worsening of diabetes, high blood sugar in the absence of diabetes, thinning of the skin and bones, and psychosis. In the same way I would not profess to use prisms or a slit lamp to the level of an optometrist’s considerable skill, these medications must not be used without knowledge of the management of these complications in the context of an individual’s medical issues. This is well outside the scope of training of optometry.

I respectfully request LD 1803 be voted “ought not to pass” for issues of patient safety. Thank you