



May 9, 2025

The Honorable Donna Bailey and Honorable Kristi Mathieson
Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services
c/o Legislative Information Office
Maine State House
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Chairs Bailey and Mathieson and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the American Optometric Association and the more than 48,000 doctors of optometry, optometric students, and paraoptometricians we represent across the country, I write to you today in strong support of LD 1803, legislation that will modernize optometric scope of practice in Maine.

As primary healthcare providers, Doctors of optometry deliver essential care and provide more than two-thirds of primary eye health care in the country. More than 99% of the U.S. population lives in counties with a doctor of optometry, and in over 5,800 communities nationwide, doctors of optometry are the only primary eye and vision care providers. Across the country, optometrists play a key role in detecting systemic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and cancer, many of which first present in the eye.

LD 1803 represents a patient-centered, access-driven solution. It would allow optometrists in Maine to provide in-office, non-invasive procedures already safely performed by doctors of optometry across the country, including states with similar demographics. These procedures are used to treat glaucoma and post-cataract conditions and fall well within the education and clinical training of today's optometrists. They are part of the standard curriculum at all accredited schools and colleges of optometry.

More than 146,000 of these procedures have been safely performed by optometrists in other states with no evidence of increased risk to patients. However, under current Maine law, these services are only available from ophthalmologists despite the training and licensure of Maine optometrists.

In addition to expanding access and reducing wait times for patients, LD 1803 will also help attract new optometry graduates to Maine by allowing them to fully utilize their education and training. With many rural and underserved areas already experiencing provider shortages, this legislation will strengthen the long-term health care workforce and better position the state to meet growing demand for eye care services.

We urge you to vote **YES** for **LD 1803** and help ensure that Mainers can access safe, timely, and comprehensive eye care from the providers they trust.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Reed", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Stephen Reed, O.D.
President, American Optometric Association