

## Chris Taranto

Good afternoon, Senator Brenner, Representative Mathieson, and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services Committee. My name is Chris Taranto, and I reside in the town of Wells in York County. I am pleased to testify in support of LD 1803, An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Optometric Practice.

I am 58 years old and have already faced numerous eye health challenges. These challenges have been both daunting and stressful, especially because my optometrist is the closest eye care provider and is still 30 minutes from my home.

Last year, I needed a YAG procedure as a follow up to prior cataract surgeries. I had to wait 7 weeks for an appointment with an ophthalmologist. During that time, my vision declined, which made me hesitant to drive at night. The day of the procedure, my wife drove me to the ophthalmologist, which is 45 minutes from my home. The procedure itself took less than 5 minutes, was painless and provided immediate relief.

Had my optometrist been permitted to perform the YAG procedure, I would have received treatment sooner and more conveniently. We all know that access to health care in Maine is challenging due to factors like remote locations and limited transportation options for many residents.

Allowing optometrists to perform the procedures included in LD 1803 would better serve the needs of our community by making treatment more accessible and less overwhelming. Please vote in favor of this important bill. Thank you.