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Thank you, Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to testify in favor of LD#1803.

My name is Lindsay Michaud, I have been a Doctor of Optometry practicing medical optometry in Kittery Maine for 6 years. I attended the New England College of Optometry in Boston for four years and completed my doctorate of optometry in 2019. I am a native Mainer, born and raised in Presque Isle.

I would like to share with you that after 8 years of schooling and extensive chair-side patient care, I was well-prepared to start my career and care for patients after graduation. During the first three years at The New England College of Optometry, or NECO as we call it, we experienced a heavy curriculum of lectures, labs, and clinical exposure. Classes include anatomy and physiology, clinical decision making, optics, neuroanatomy, ocular disease, among many others. Students take 10-11 classes each fall and spring semester, with a lighter summer semester consisting of 5-6 courses each year.

The curriculum also includes rigorous patient care and clinical programs. We began seeing patients in our first semester of first year, conducting vision screenings for children in Boston schools. In the second and third years, we spent 1-2 full days per week at community health centers, VA hospitals, or private practices around Boston. In the fourth year, students participate in externships that consist of four 3-month clinical rotations, where we immersed ourselves in the field as eye care practitioners 40 hours a week under the supervision of an attending optometrist.

Before performing any clinical tests on actual patients, we practiced our skills on each other in pre-clinic and we had to pass strict practical exams before progressing to more advanced testing. We spent extensive time developing our skills in various aspects of the exam, from pupil tests and glasses checks, to removing metal from replica corneas with the tip of a needle.

I remember the very first time I did a dilation and irrigation of the drainage portion of the eyelid during my residency, I was nervous, but I was also confident in the many hours that I had practiced the procedure on fellow classmates in preclinic, and had it performed many times on myself as well. The procedure was successful and without any complications, and I felt relieved to be so well prepared.

In the third and fourth years, we take three Board examinations, which include two written tests and one clinical exam. The clinical exam required me to perform a full comprehensive eye exam

on live patients in front of a board of examiners, including a contact lens evaluation, full binocular vision workup, and various ocular procedures needed during an exam.

After graduation, I chose to pursue my interest in ocular disease with a one-year residency at the Maine VA in Togus. I gained more experience treating and managing complex ocular diseases, and I became much more comfortable with the process of laser procedures and removing lumps and bumps. Other optometrists may pursue residencies in pediatrics, specialty contact lenses, or low vision.

The four-year optometry education at NECO is extensive and rigorous, with a demanding curriculum designed to prepare students to diagnose, treat, manage, and perform clinical skills with patient education and safety as priorities. With all the hours of firsthand clinical experience and intensive classroom learning, I developed skills to be fully prepared to practice as a confident and competent optometrist.

Thank you,

Lindsay Michaud, OD, FAAO