



California Optometric Association

For Immediate Release  
July 10, 2017

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## ***Key Senate Committee Votes to Improve Access to Crucial Care***

Sacramento, CA – The California Optometric Association (COA) praised the Senate Business and Professions Committee for moving forward AB 443 (Salas), a bill supported by COA to improve access to eye care that improves Californians’ vision and health.

COA President Dr. Sage Hider said:

“The California Optometric Association is encouraged by the Senate Business and Professions Committee’s support of AB 443 and by the positive and productive dialogue with stakeholders that has resulted in the current bill.

“AB 443 brings crucial health services closer to patients in California, recognizing that Doctors of Optometry can help bridge significant access gaps that have impeded Californians with lower incomes and in geographically remote areas from accessing potentially life-saving care.

“As California confronts a wide-spread and costly diabetes epidemic, it is even more urgent that California empower Doctors of Optometry to utilize our extensive clinical training to deliver more of the care Californians need and relieve pressure on our overstretched health care system. We are hopeful that with continued, positive engagement among stakeholders, this vital bill will continue to move forward.”

A severe shortage of primary care providers compromises Californians’ health. Today, 46 counties have too few primary care doctors to meet the needs of their communities. California lags behind most other states in allowing highly trained doctors of optometry to perform routine, but medically necessary procedures.

AB 443 would allow optometrists to safely provide care that is within their extensive training, alleviating pressure on the health care system and making eye care more accessible in rural California and for lower income patients. Under AB 443, optometrists could test patients for diabetes, administer flu, shingles and pneumonia vaccines after receiving additional training and certification, and broaden treatment options for glaucoma. The bill will also expand the types of eye diseases doctors of optometry can treat.

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