



California Optometric Association

For Immediate Release

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California Optometric Association Champions Bill to Expand Optometric Practice in California

Governor Brown Signs AB 443 by Asm. Salas

Sacramento, CA – Over the weekend Governor Jerry Brown signed AB 443, a bill championed by the California Optometric Association (COA) to improve eye care access for Californians. The bill, authored by Assembly Member Rudy Salas (D-Bakersfield), enables doctors of optometry to safely expand the number of procedures they may offer to patients.

COA President Dr. Sage Hider said:

“The California Optometric Association is proud to have opened the door to health for more Californians through AB 443. This important legislation is a step forward for the optometric profession, empowering doctors of optometry to more fully utilize our extensive training, education and experience to help expand eye and health care access to Californians. Improving such access is especially crucial for communities with lower incomes and those that are urban or geographically remote and face low numbers of primary care providers. AB 443 also strengthens optometrists’ role in California’s fight against diabetes, offering optometrists more tools to detect diabetes early, prevent blindness, and save lives.”

Over the course of the past year, COA worked closely with health care stakeholders to enable doctors of optometry to expand the number of procedures they may perform under law, consistent with most other states. Effective January 1, 2018, AB 443 will do the following:

- Allows therapeutic pharmaceutical agent – certified (TPA) doctors of optometry to use all non-controlled substance medications, noninvasive medical devices and technology that are FDA indicated for a condition optometrists can treat. As new treatments are made available that are not FDA indicated for a condition optometrists can treat, the State Board of Optometry may authorize their use by optometrists via regulation.
- Clarifies optometrists may prescribe currently allowable drugs “off label.”
- Allows TPA optometrists to prescribe Tramadol for up to three days.
- Allows TPA optometrists to treat hypotrichosis (allowing optometrists to use LATISSE).



- Clarifies TPA optometrists may treat blepharitis.
- Allows TPA optometrists to give intravenous injection for the purpose of performing ocular angiography under a supervision protocol.
- Allows TPA optometrists to collect blood by skin puncture for testing patients for diabetes.
- Allows TPA optometrists to use a skin test limited to the superficial layer of the skin to diagnose ocular allergies.
- Allows TPA optometrists to use a needle to remove foreign bodies.
- Allows glaucoma-certified optometrists to treat steroid-induced glaucoma.
- Eliminates many of the protocols in current law and consolidates the referral requirements.
- Allows TPA optometrists to administer flu, shingles and pneumonia vaccines after receiving training and certification.

For the first time, the optometric scope of practice in California will automatically expand to include new non-invasive technologies as they are invented. It also gives the California State Board of Optometry the ability to approve new things under specified circumstances. Up until now, there was no mechanism for the board to approve anything not specially authorized by statute.

Dr. Hider concluded, "California optometrists worked diligently over five years to advocate for scope of practice changes that strengthen our profession and our ability to care for Californians' eyes. COA is grateful to the many doctors who invested their time and energy into this important public health effort. Building on this important legislation, COA will continue to advance solutions to improve public access to care, protect vision, and save lives."

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