

Assembly Committee Moves AB 443 Forward to Improve Access to Eye Care, Health Opportunity

Sacramento, CA – The California Optometric Association (COA) applauded the Assembly Business and Professions Committee’s passage of 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, “California’s doctors of optometry are encouraged that the Assembly Business and Professions Committee has advanced Asm. Salas’ legislation to expand Californians’ access to eye care and the latest eye care technology. As advocates for patients, eye doctors are supporting AB 443 to remove barriers to care, especially for our communities with the lowest incomes. With extensive clinical training, Doctors of Optometry deliver the care Californians need and relieve pressure on our overstretched health care system. The Committee’s vote to move the bill forward recognizes the importance of improving access to health care and means we can continue to refine the bill. We are hopeful that positive discussions will continue with other stakeholders for the best interests of Californians.”

Despite the state’s herculean effort to expand health coverage to five million Californians under the Affordable Care Act, 46 counties have too few primary care doctors to meet the needs of their communities. Despite this enormous pressure on the health care system, California lags behind most other states in allowing highly trained doctors of optometry to perform routine, but medically necessary procedures. Instead, rural residents must make long drives to find a doctor that accepts Medi-Cal or forgo needed care.

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.

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