



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF
PLASTIC SURGEONS®



THE PLASTIC SURGERY
FOUNDATION®

Executive Office

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February 20, 2017

House Health and Government Operations Committee
The Honorable Shane Pendergrass, *Chair*
The Honorable Eric Bromwell, *Vice Chair*
House Office Building, Room 241
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

Honorable Committee Members:

On behalf of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) and the Maryland Society of Plastic Surgeons (MDSPS), we urge you to oppose House Bill 807/Senate Bill 611: Health Occupations – Requirements for the Practice of Optometry – Miscellaneous Provisions, which would expand the scope of practice for optometrists beyond their professional training. The Maryland Society of Plastic Surgeons is the largest association of plastic surgeons in Maryland and, in conjunction with our national affiliate the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, collectively represent 175 board-certified plastic surgeons in the state. As surgeons, we encourage you to maintain the high level of patient care that has been established and maintain current standards that permit only licensed Medical Doctors (MD) or Doctors of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) who meet appropriate education, training and professional standards to perform surgery in the ocular region.

If passed, House Bill 807/Senate Bill 611 would allow non-physician optometrists to perform surgical procedures on the eyelid. This includes procedures that fall squarely within the practice of medicine. Alarming, the bill also does not include any educational requirements for optometrists to perform these surgical procedures. In sum, allowing optometrists to practice medicine without the requisite medical school and residency training would jeopardize patient safety and lower the standard of care in the state.

House Bill 807/Senate Bill 611 also give optometrists the authority to use a wide range of pharmaceuticals, including highly addictive narcotics, that require a fundamental and systematic medical understanding of the human body. This understanding is gained through the clinical and educational rigor of a physician's training. Physicians are uniquely qualified to treat patients in the rare instance when side effects, including allergic reaction or some other life-threatening complication, arise when these drugs are administered. Optometrists do not receive the same education and training that physicians, including ophthalmologists and plastic surgeons, receive.

Optometrists have insufficient training in disease management, for example, which is critical in identifying, understanding and effectively treating underlying conditions that can cause eye disease, like diabetes and hypertension. Sadly, in 2009, several patients at a VA facility received inadequate treatment for glaucoma from optometrists. An investigation found that as a result of the poor treatment 22 patients were found

to have progressive vision loss.¹ Ophthalmologists and plastic surgeons must attain a core medical and surgical education while completing seven to ten years of training, which includes increasing responsibility and decision-making authority in the hospital setting. Optometrists only complete four to five years of education with significantly less clinical exposure and responsibility.

Due to patient safety issues, such as the possibility of complications arising from surgery and serious risk of vision loss, it is critical that such procedures are performed by physician surgeons who have the comprehensive training and board certification to handle those complications when they do occur. We urge you to **OPPOSE** House Bill 807 and Senate Bill 611 to protect the high standard of patient safety in Maryland.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debra Johnson MD". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Debra Johnson, MD
President, American Society of Plastic Surgeons

¹ Dremann, Sue. VA investigates glaucoma patients' treatment: 'Exhaustive' internal review found inadequate referrals; optometry chief sidelined. Palo Alto Weekly, July 23, 2009.