

April 13, 2017

The Honorable Nathan Deal  
Office of the Governor  
206 Washington Street  
111 State Capitol  
Atlanta, GA 30334

Re: Georgia Senate Bill 153 – Veto

Dear Governor Deal:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and student members, I am writing to express our strong opposition to Georgia Senate Bill (SB) 153. SB 153 proposes expanding optometrist scope of practice to include the authority to inject pharmaceutical agents around a patient's eye after obtaining a certificate that shows successful completion of a 30-hour "injectables" training program. Because optometrists do not have the education, training and experience to perform these procedures, the AMA urges you to veto SB 153.

Surgery in or around the human eye is not something to be taken lightly. The AMA believes that surgery includes injection of diagnostic or therapeutic substances into body cavities, internal organs, joints, sensory organs, and the central nervous system. Patient safety and quality of care demand that individuals who perform these invasive procedures have appropriate medical education and training. Appropriate eye care includes not only training in the technical skills needed to perform the procedure itself, but also the medical knowledge needed to analyze when surgery may or may not be clinically indicated.

Ophthalmologists' training includes four years of medical education, and an additional three to five years in postgraduate residency and fellowship training. During that advanced training, physicians learn the most effective, safe and appropriate treatments, including surgical, pharmacologic and other interventions based on each patient's unique medical needs.

In sharp contrast to the seven to nine years of ophthalmologic medical education and training, optometric education rarely goes beyond the postgraduate level and is focused almost entirely on examining the eye for vision prescription, dispensing corrective lenses and performing some eye screening functions.

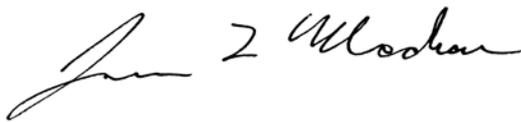
Therefore, optometrists do not possess the comprehensive medical knowledge necessary to safely perform invasive procedures on patients. Students of optometry are not exposed to standard surgical procedure training, aseptic surgical technique or medical response to adverse surgical events as a part of their education. In fact, unlike ophthalmologists, optometrists are not required to partake in any postgraduate advanced training, where the knowledge and skills learned during school are clinically applied through actual patient care under the supervision of a licensed professional.

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Quite simply, the safe use of injectable pharmaceutical agents requires the comprehensive education and clinical training received in medical school and residency training. The 30-hour “injectables” training program proposed by SB 153 comes nowhere near this standard. If you have any questions, please contact Kristin Schleiter, Senior Legislative Attorney, AMA Advocacy Resource Center at [kristin.schleiter@ama-assn.org](mailto:kristin.schleiter@ama-assn.org) or (312) 464-4783.

In the interest of maintaining the high standard of eye care that patients deserve, the AMA strongly urges you to veto SB 153. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Madara". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".

James L. Madara, MD

cc: Medical Association of Georgia  
American Academy of Ophthalmology  
Patrice A. Harris, MD, MA