

June 6, 2017

To: Members, North Carolina Senate

As adjournment of the 2017 session of the NC General Assembly approaches, physicians across North Carolina and at the national level remain extremely concerned over House Bill 36. Even though this legislation was converted to a study bill from its original version, which would authorize optometric surgery, patient safety remains in the balance.

The physician organizations signed on to this letter want to collectively and respectfully request your opposition to this dangerous legislation.

Since being introduced, HB 36 has been incorrectly depicted as a turf battle between ophthalmology and optometry. This mischaracterization has been perpetuated by the bill's proponents. **Physicians of all specialties, not just ophthalmology, stand opposed to this bill.**

We hope you will agree that the evidence clearly shows that optometrists should not be authorized to perform surgery in North Carolina.

- There is no access problem in North Carolina for eye surgery. There is an adequate distribution of ophthalmologists across the state to meet the need for ocular surgery. This fact is well documented.
- There is a striking difference in ophthalmologists' and optometrists' training. Ophthalmologists complete more than 17,000 hours of medical education and surgical training. It's simply not possible to gain competency in eye surgery through a 32-hour weekend course.
- There would be no cost savings by optometrists being authorized to perform surgery. Cost to the healthcare system can actually increase as confirmed by an Oklahoma study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association.
- The public has spoken. The results of a statewide poll show that 90+% of the public want their eye surgery performed by an ophthalmologist.

- A study of this issue is certain to confirm the concerns and facts presented in opposition to the bill since its introduction and is therefore unnecessary.

Optometrists are valued and respected members of the health care team. The medical profession must, however, put the interests of our patients and your constituents as the utmost priority when health policy issues such as HB 36 are considered. We hope that you will agree and will stand in opposition of this bill.

Thank you for your consideration and service.

Respectfully,

NC Medical Society  
NC Dermatology Association  
NC Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons  
NC Academy of Family Physicians  
NC Chapter, American College of Physicians  
NC Neurological Society  
NC Orthopaedic Association  
NC Society of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery  
NC Society of Pathologists  
NC Pediatric Society  
NC Society of Plastic Surgeons  
NC Psychiatric Association  
NC Chapter, American College of Radiology  
NC Spine Society  
NC Chapter, American College of Surgeons  
NC Urological Association  
American Medical Association  
American Academy of Ophthalmology  
American Academy of Dermatology  
American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery  
American College of Surgeons  
American Society for Dermatologic Surgery