



WHAT OPPONENTS SAY: **LD 1803** LEGISLATION MODERNIZING OPTOMETRY IN MAINE

WHAT OPPONENTS SAY: THE FACTS:

Optometrists are not eye surgeons and did not go to medical school.

Optometrists have undergraduate and **DOCTOR OF OPTOMETRY (O.D.)** degrees and train for nearly 10,000 hours. Proposed legislation seeks to allow optometrists to provide the same in-office, non-invasive, minor ophthalmologic laser procedures that are currently being performed by optometrists in 12 other states and are approved to be performed within the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in states with expanded scope of practice. Like dentists, podiatrists and osteopaths, optometrists obtain the same basic education as their physician colleagues with special emphasis on their area of specialty.

WHAT OPPONENTS SAY: THE FACTS:

Access is not an issue.

Optometrists practice in 15 of Maine's 16 counties, providing eye care access to 92% of the state's total population. Only 11 counties have at least one ophthalmologist.

Ophthalmologists say they're able to see all patients, however many patients **WAIT 4-8 WEEKS** for an appointment and have to **TRAVEL FURTHER** from their home for an in-office procedure that optometrists are trained and certified to perform.

WHAT OPPONENTS SAY: THE FACTS:

Opponents claim optometrists only attend a weekend course to learn how to perform laser procedures.

ALL U.S. OPTOMETRY SCHOOLS TRAIN STUDENTS to diagnose and treat glaucoma, cataracts, and other diseases as well as provide extensive education about the proposed procedures.

Practicing optometrists will be required to complete an approved training program with didactic and hands-on training in conjunction with an accredited college of optometry to be certified to perform these procedures. These programs are multi-day certifications that build upon the doctor of optometry degree.

WHAT OPPONENTS SAY: THE FACTS:

Opponents claim allowing optometrists to perform laser procedures puts patient safety at risk.

Optometrists have been **SAFELY PERFORMING THESE PROCEDURES FOR MORE THAN 25 YEARS.**

None of the states that allow optometrists to perform laser procedures has ever reversed a scope expansion — and there has been no increase in malpractice rates in those states. In fact, many states with expanded optometric scope have some of the lowest malpractice rates in the nation.