

## Protect Patients from Risky Eye Procedures

### H. 104 Unnecessarily Risks Harm to One of the Most Delicate Organs of the Body – The Eye

Section 9 of H. 104 proposes to expand the scope of the practice of optometry to include eye surgery, procedures that are currently restricted to ophthalmologists (MDs). This could include:

- all ophthalmic lasers, including vitreous and retina laser procedures
- all injections, including intraocular (inside the eye)
- numerous eyelid and ocular surface surgeries (including excisional biopsies of potential malignancies)
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**VT optometrists are not currently trained to perform eye surgery.**

An example of a serious eyelid laceration injury caused by a dog bite in a child which could be treated by an optometrist with an “advanced procedure” endorsement:



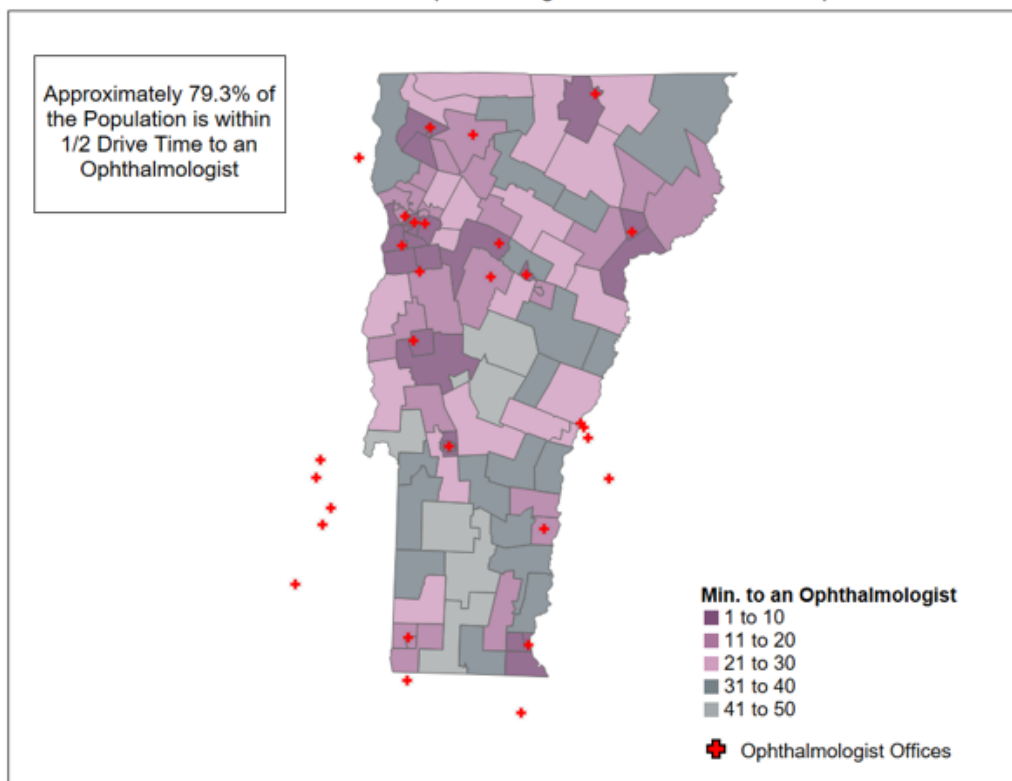
All surgical procedures, laser and scalpel, are invasive and carry inherent risk to patient safety.

It is unnecessarily risky to allow eye surgery to be performed by those without extensive medical school and surgical residency training. Allowing optometrists to perform surgery without appropriate training, oversight, and competency assessments may expose Vermonters to significant potential harm.

### Vermonters have sufficient access to highly trained ophthalmologists

There is no unmet patient need compelling this risky and dramatic change in optometric practice. Vermonters have adequate access to qualified and experienced MD eye surgeons when ophthalmic procedures of any kind are required.

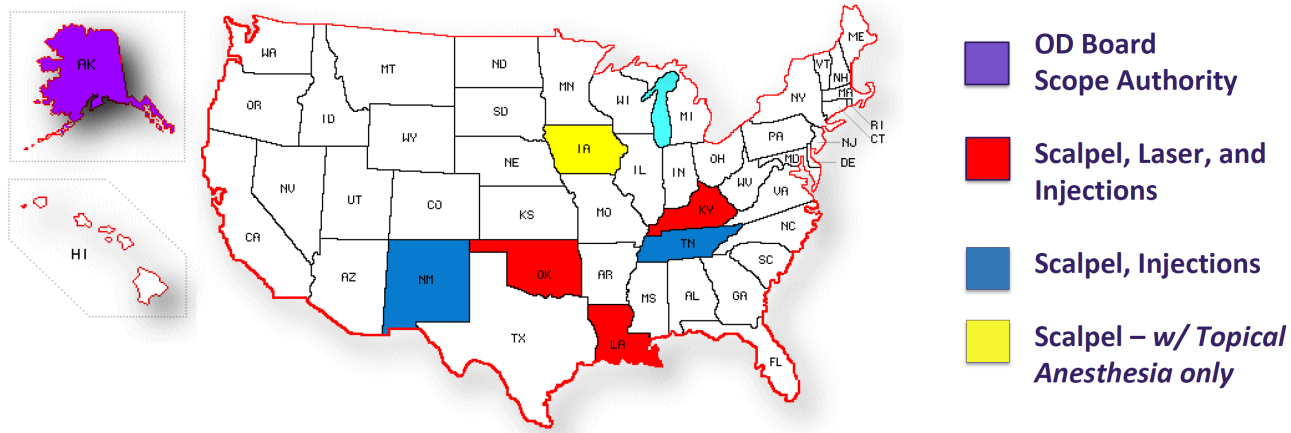
Estimated Drive to an Ophthalmologist over a House District Map



## Unprecedented in New England

The proposed optometric legislation would, for the first time in the State's history, permit people who are not licensed to practice medicine to perform eye surgery on Vermont citizens. **Current allowed procedures for Vermont optometrists are very much in line with the large majority of state optometric practice acts** in this country. The proposal to expand procedures to surgery, lasers, and injections poses significant and unnecessary risks to patient safety.

# Optometric Surgical Authority



Additionally, outcomes data suggest that with certain laser surgeries, there is a **higher likelihood of repeat surgeries when performed by optometrists as compared to ophthalmologists.**<sup>i</sup>

Inappropriate training may lead to unnecessary procedures which could increase health care costs.

## Training standards proposed in H.104 are highly inadequate.

Limited educational and training standards reduce patient safety. The educational topics and training proposed in H.104 do not include any clinical or hands-on patient training. Similar requirements have been met in other states with one or both of two 16 hour courses containing no procedural experience on actual patients<sup>ii</sup>. This type of extremely limited educational course does not remotely compare to completion of a nationally accredited 4 year surgical residency training program as is required for ophthalmologists who have already completed a 4 year MD degree program.

<sup>i</sup> Stein, Joshua D, et al. "Comparison of Outcomes of Laser Trabeculoplasty Performed by Optometrists vs Ophthalmologists in Oklahoma." *JAMA Ophthalmology*, vol. 134, no. 10, 2016, pp. 1095-1101.

<sup>ii</sup> Northeastern State University Oklahoma College of Optometry. *NSUOCO Advanced Procedures Schedule*. 2018. [optometry.nsuok.edu/Portals/5/PDF%20Files/CE/20180712-AP-Schedule.pdf](http://optometry.nsuok.edu/Portals/5/PDF%20Files/CE/20180712-AP-Schedule.pdf); "Ophthalmic Laser Course Prepares Optometrists for Wider Scope of Practice." *Salus University*, <http://www.salus.edu/News/News-Stories/Ophthalmic-Laser-Course-Prepares-Optometrists-for.aspx>; "Optometric surgical procedures courses now available at Optometry's