

Good afternoon,

My name is Morgan McClintic and I am an optometrist practicing in Waitsfield, VT. I feel I have a unique perspective on the scope bill (S.64) being considered, and I wanted to share my thoughts. I graduated from the Southern College of Optometry in Memphis, TN, and I am originally from Arkansas. I decided to move to Vermont after the pandemic because living and practicing in a progressive community is very important to me. I feel that everyone deserves the right to quality health care and know it is important for me to fight for my patients in any way I can.

I graduated Optometry School in 2019 and received thorough training on the procedures recommended in the bill. Furthermore, I moved here from Arkansas, which is a state where most of these procedures are already within the scope of practice of Optometry. I want to assure you that these procedures are very safe and will greatly expand access for our patients. This is the number one reason this bill has been fought so hard for. Vermonters deserve access to care and they deserve to receive that care from a qualified, well-trained professional in a timely manner. I'm sure many of you know that health care in Vermont is limited, whether it is due to availability of providers, insurance coverage, or lack of specialists. I would not be surprised if every single one of you has had to wait longer than you wished for an appointment of some sort of health care examination or treatment. As optometrists, we are fighting for you! We know this is an issue across the state and we are spending hours upon hours outside of patient care and practice management on communicating the value of scope expansion to you, our state politicians, as well as patients and community members. Asking for this scope expansion is not taken lightly, but we feel it is very important to fight for.

Furthermore, contributing to the delay in health care in Vermont is a lack of providers. As someone who was not born and raised here, I have seen how challenging it is to live in Vermont. High cost of living and a lack of adequate health care is a huge part of this right now. I am here because I love Vermont, I love Vermonters, and I am physically, mentally, and financially able to be here to fight for us! As you may know, over 15 states have already passed scope expansion laws (some decades ago). If I am being completely honest, it is a little disappointing to me that a majority of these states are in the South. It is where I am from and I love Arkansas dearly, but I immediately recognized that Vermont was a very special place. In Vermont, we fight for our neighbors. We lend a helping hand. We fight for the rights of all people because that is what each and every person deserves. We are progressive, yet many aspects of our health care have fallen behind many other states. I want Vermont, and New England as a whole, to lead the way in health care innovations and patient care for our country.

That is what my patients deserve, so I would be doing them a disservice if I did not ask each of you to support S.64. We will not improve access if we do not fight for it. We will not attract more doctors if we don't allow them to practice to the extent of their training. I fear there will be an increase in, and have seen firsthand, providers dismissing Vermont as a good place to practice because of this very reason.

Thank you for reading this lengthy email. Please feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns. As a young optometrist trained on these procedures, who has gone through this scope expansion in another state, and who truly CARES about Vermonters, I want to provide clarity on the details of this bill and stress how important it is to me for my patients and the future of optometry in our state.

Kindly,  
Morgan McClintic, OD