

I'm writing in regard to S.64, a bill before the Health and Welfare Committee. I'm a medical doctor, working as an ophthalmologist for twenty years. I've worked in Vermont since 2009. I practice at the University and teach at our medical school.

The optometrists I know are good and professional people, but their plan is unwise and dangerous. I have worked alongside optometrists for two decades, sometimes across town and sometimes in the same office.

Here is the story of a patient that I met last year, call him Mr Smith. He had a week of pain and vision loss. A Burlington optometrist diagnosed "angle closure," a type of glaucoma. The "angle" is the eye's drainage system, and when the angle closes, eye pressure increases. One treatment is done with laser, called "laser iridotomy," which is included in S.64. The optometrist referred him for laser treatment.

Examination at UVM showed that Mr Smith had *open angles*, with no role for laser. Instead, Mr Smith had an inflammatory disease of the eye, called "uveitis." A laser is *contraindicated* in the setting of inflammation; laser would worsen inflammation. Further evaluation discovered the cause of Mr Smith's uveitis: he had a tuberculosis infection! *Tuberculosis is a threat to Mr Smith's life and a danger for the community.* A laser would have delayed diagnosis, wasted health care dollars, and prolonged infectious risk to the community. Mr Smith required *six months of antibiotic treatment.*

The optometrist who examined Mr Smith is *one of the leaders in the push to expand optometric practice.* She has written articles for the press and testified before the legislature. Her own practice shows the lack of optometric training to make complex medical decisions.

This example is *one of many.* The eye and its pathologies do not exist in isolation. The goal of medical and surgical training is to comprehend the body in its totality. Optometric training has no meaningful comparison with the path of medical and surgical education.

I emphasize Vermont's optometrists are good and caring people; they can be counted upon to do the expert work of measuring for glasses and contact lenses, which is the core of their training. But S.64 goes far beyond the limits of optometric training. S.64 would yield improper treatment, waste health care dollars, cause confusion, and in some cases cause profound harm