

I am a practicing neurologist in Vermont, and I write to strongly oppose S.64, the bill that would lower standards for eye surgery in our state.

Surgical management of the eye should be entrusted only to highly trained physicians with extensive medical and surgical education. Ophthalmologists complete medical school, residency, and years of supervised surgical training. This level of preparation is essential for patient safety, particularly given the complexity and potential complications of eye surgery.

I would never entrust my own eye care to anyone other than an ophthalmologist. There is evidence demonstrating that eye surgeries performed by optometrists require revision at significantly higher rates than those performed by ophthalmologists, resulting in increased costs and additional procedures for patients. A study published in *JAMA Ophthalmology* <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamaophthalmology/fullarticle/2535226> found substantially higher rates of reoperation following optometrist-performed laser procedures, raising serious concerns about safety and quality of care.

Equally troubling, a review of S.64 suggests that only two supervised procedures would be required before independent surgical practice. This is far below any reasonable standard for surgical competency and places patients at unnecessary risk.

This bill will disproportionately harm less informed and economically disadvantaged Vermonters, who may be unaware of the difference in training and feel compelled to accept lower-standard care. Vermont should be raising standards for patient safety—not lowering them. Additionally, wait times for optometry in our state are very long, and this change would only decrease access to routine eye care, the specialty of optometry.

For these reasons, I strongly urge you to oppose S.64.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thank you,

Elle Levit MD