

I am an infectious disease physician in central Vermont and a member of VMS. I am reaching out because of my concerns about the bill coming forward to allow optometrists to perform surgery. This is my own person opinion and in no way a reflection of the opinion of my organization. A few points:

- There is a meaningful difference between ophthalmologists and optometrists (physician surgeons who attend medical school and then at least four years of training in surgery/advanced medicine vs. 4 years of optometry school with training in primary eye care, no required post grad education and **no standardized surgical training**)
- Patient safety is at risk by allowing optometrists with no standardized surgical training to perform laser/scalpel surgery around/on/in the eye.
- Access - we have skilled ophthalmologists across the state who currently available to take care of Vermonters' eye surgical needs. The wait list for routine eye exams with optometrists is already months' long.

I don't think expanding the scope of Optometric practice to include surgery is a good idea for Vermonters. Our eyes are important, and I, personally, would not want someone without standardized surgical training to operate on my eyes. Here is the Vermont Ophthalmological Safe Surgery website: <https://safevisionvt.org/>.

Sincerely,

Jessie Leyse, MD, MPH