

The House Committee on Public Health, Welfare and Labor, did not pass Legislation on Tuesday that expands the procedures optometrists are allowed to do. The committee heard people speak for and against the bill for around an hour. Testimony was limited to 30 minutes to each side.

According to the legislation, the definition of optometry would expand to include “correction and relief of ocular abnormalities by surgical procedures.” Belinda Starkey, president of the Arkansas Optometric Association Board, says students in optometry programs already receive the up-to-date training necessary for these procedures.

Optometry Fails CC1 :12 “...to practice”
“Students in optometry schools across the nation are educated to provide patients with the most advanced level of care. And that’s a much higher level than what Arkansas law will allow them to practice.”

Dr. Tracy Baltz, an ophthalmologist, spoke against the legislation, saying the training optometrists would receive, is not comparable to the experience ophthalmologists have in surgical procedures.

Optometry Fails CC2 :19 “...on the training”
“I would still be against it, if it’s just these three or four procedures because one of those procedures is, that they can take a needle and stick it in the eye. That takes a lot of training. That takes a lot of time under the microscope to learn how to do that successfully. It just takes that training. I just have to keep harping on the training.”

The bill ultimately failed with a vote of 9 to 10