



Alaska State Legislature

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Sponsor: Rules By Request of LEG BUDGET & AUDIT
Current Version: CSSB 255 (FIN)
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Fact Sheet for: Senate Bill 255

Short Title: OPTOMETRY: EXTEND BD/ LIC. ENDORSEMENT

Summary:

- Extends the termination date of the Board of Examiners in Optometry to June 30, 2014.
- Amends optometry statutes to ensure they support current license endorsements for both "prescribe" and "use."
- Deletes the statutory cite requiring 24 hours of continuing education instruction and makes other statutory "housekeeping" changes requested by the board.

Benefits:

- Continues the regulation and licensing of qualified optometrists necessary to protect the public's health, safety and welfare.
- Maintains and potentially increases the number of licensees available to provide services to the public by authorizing a "use" only license endorsement, and grandfathering in practitioners who have been granted a "use" only endorsement without appropriate statutory authority.
- Allows the Board to establish, in regulation, the minimum number of hours of continuing education instruction without amending statutes.
- Performs statutory housekeeping to eliminate unnecessary references and improve the board's ability to protect the public.

Background:

- Legislative Audit concluded that the Board of Examiners in Optometry (BEO) continues to serve a public need and is operating in the public interest. Further, the BEO has operated effectively, adopted regulatory changes, and supported legislation that improved its oversight process and promoted more effective regulation of licensed optometrists. Legislative Audit also recommended that the Legislature amend the optometry statutes to ensure they support current license endorsements for the diagnostic use of pharmaceutical agents. Currently, statutory language provides for a single endorsement for both "prescribe" and "use." However, the BEO is issuing two types of endorsements. The first allows a practitioner to both prescribe and use pharmaceutical agents, and the second allows a practitioner to "use" only. Current law does not authorize the "use" only endorsement. SB 255 adds a section authorizing a "use" only endorsement and also grandfatheres in practitioners who were given that endorsement over the years.