

Senate Bill 2184

Workforce Development Committee

February 10, 2023

Good Morning Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Dr. Taya Patzman, and I am a member of the State Board of Optometry. I am speaking to you today on behalf of the Board.

I appear before you today, in opposition to Senate Bill 2184 and ask for an exemption if it should pass. The State Board of Optometry is asking for exemption in Section 1 a. of the Board Membership- Appointment-Terms and Section 1 of the Licensure of Foreign Practitioners- Compacts, of the new chapter to title 43 of the North Dakota Century Code. The State Board is asking for exemption due to concerns in these sections.

Senate Bill 2184 would change the terms of our board members from 5 years to 3 years, with a two-term limit. Our board typically only meets twice a year, so in a three year term, a member would only be present at six meetings. We feel that it requires a longer time period for a board member to acquire the knowledge necessary to be effective. Since there are only 193 licensed practicing optometrists in the state, it is difficult to get volunteers to serve on our board. The Board of Optometry has two lay members of which one term was up for renewal last year. The current board member wished to retire from serving on the board, but a replacement was not able to be found, and she ended up having to renew her 5-year term. This proposed change to a 3-year term with a maximum of two consecutive terms would make this more problematic to fill these positions.

The second area of concern for the board is pertaining to the Licensure of Foreign Practitioners-Compacts section 1. This section states that a board shall issue a license to an applicant who is a foreign practitioner, unless the board determines the issuance of the license would jeopardize the health and safety of the residents of this state. We currently endorse optometrists from other states if they submit an application, pass the open book North Dakota jurisprudence exam, pass a background check, pay the license fee, and are in good standing with their current license. The Board requests that these minimum requirements be met before a license is issued.

The State Board of Optometry's primary intent is to protect the public. Senate Bill 2184 limits experienced members of the State Board of Optometry from serving their peers and profession. I urge you to vote **Do Not Pass** on SB 2184 or include Optometry as an exempt profession in Section 1 of Board Membership-Appointment- Terms and Section 1 of Licensure of Foreign Practitioners-Compacts.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.