

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2000 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 1174 (Delegate D. Davis. *et al.*)

Environmental Matters

Optometrists - Quality Eye Health Improvement Act

This bill broadens the practice responsibilities of a therapeutically certified optometrist and gives authority to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) to establish quality assurance guidelines for therapeutically certified optometrists and optometric care.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Establishing quality assurance guidelines could be handled with existing Board of Optometry resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal. Optometrists that are small businesses would have broader practice responsibilities and may be able to treat more patients.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill allows a therapeutically certified optometrist to administer and prescribe certain oral and ocular medications to patients. It repeals the requirement that an optometrist consult with an ophthalmologist in certain situations where an ocular medication did not elicit the expected response. In addition, it allows an optometrist to conduct other procedures such as ordering appropriate laboratory tests that are within the optometrist's scope of practice. The bill transfers authority from the Maryland Optometric Association and the Maryland Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons to DHMH to establish quality assurance guidelines for therapeutically certified optometrists and optometric care. The bill prohibits an optometrist from using the title "doctor" or any other word that suggests the optometrist practices medicine or ophthalmology. The bill also allows the Board of

Optometry to waive certain educational requirements for certification as an optometrist when the applicant is certified to practice in another state.

Current Law: Therapeutically certified optometrists have limited authority to prescribe or administer ocular medications to patients, and cannot prescribe or administer oral medications to patients. An optometrist must consult with an ophthalmologist if a patient has not responded to treatment as expected. The Maryland Optometric Association and Maryland Society of Eye Physicians currently determine quality assurance standards for the practice of optometry.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (Board of Optometry),
Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 1, 2000
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