

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2008 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 709 (Senator Lenett)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Health Occupations - Optometrists - Therapeutic Contact Lenses

This bill authorizes a therapeutically certified optometrist to prescribe and dispense a “therapeutic contact lens.”

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill’s requirements could be handled with existing resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: A therapeutic contact lens means a vision correction device that contains a topical therapeutic pharmaceutical agent.

Current Law: A therapeutically certified optometrist is a licensed optometrist who has provided evidence to the board that he or she has met the following requirements:

- completed at least 110 hours of a therapeutic pharmaceutical agents course approved by the board;
- passed a pharmacology examination relating to the treatment and management of ocular disease, which is prepared, administered, and graded by the National Board of Examiners in Optometry or any other nationally recognized optometric organization approved by the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene;
- is currently certified by the board to administer topical ocular diagnostic pharmaceutical agents; and
- completed an eight-hour course in the management of topical steroids approved by the board.

In addition to treatment performed by a licensed optometrist, a therapeutically certified optometrist can administer or prescribe certain therapeutic pharmaceutical agents or remove superficial foreign bodies from a human eye, adnexa, or lacrimal system.

Thus, a therapeutically certified optometrist can administer and prescribe topical therapeutic pharmaceutical agents limited to • ocular antihistamines, decongestants, and combinations thereof; • ocular antiallergy pharmaceutical agents; •ocular antibiotics and combinations of ocular antibiotics, excluding specially formulated or fortified antibiotics; • anti-inflammatory agents; • ocular lubricants and artificial tears; • tropicamide; • homatropine; • nonprescription drugs that are commercially available; and • primary open-angle glaucoma medications.

A therapeutically certified optometrist is held to the same standard of care as an ophthalmologist licensed by the Board of Physicians and providing similar services.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 1381 (Delegate Mizeur) – Health and Government Operations.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 3, 2008
mcp/ljm

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