

October 13, 2021

## **URGENT! The anonymous WAEPS Safe Surgery Fund**

Dear Colleagues,

**THE SHORT OF IT:** Optometrists will be asking the legislature for SURGICAL scope of practice expansion in January. This will be a full-blown scope of practice battle. That will mean an enormous expense of time and money. Like all states that have been successful in defeating optometry scope attempts, at a minimum WAEPS will need to:

- Hire a PR firm
- Launch a social media campaign
- Contract with an additional lobbyist
- Pay for legal and consultant fees
- Organize grassroots efforts
- Secure additional WSMA administrative time

***These expenses have led to a projected budget deficit of \$200,000-\$300,000.***

**THE ASK:** WAEPS requires additional financial support to defeat this scope expansion. We need each member to donate a minimum of \$1,000 to our new special scope of practice fund. We need your donations ASAP, but hopefully no later than October 25th in order for us to be effective. THESE DONATIONS ARE ANONYMOUS SINCE THEY ARE NOT POLITICAL DONATIONS TO THE PAC. THERE IS NO PUBLIC REPORTING. ***None of these funds will be distributed to legislators. This means for those of you concerned about losing optometric referrals, you now have a way to donate anonymously.*** (By way of comparison, each ophthalmologist in Arkansas donated an average of \$15,000 to their referendum attempt).

**HOW TO DO IT:** Hit the DONATE button below!

Donor levels are: \$5,000 Platinum, \$2,500 Gold or \$1,000 Silver. Remember that donations to the **WAEPS Safe Surgery Fund** are anonymous.

INSERT DONATE BUTTON HERE

**AND NOW THE DETAILS:** You may have seen emails from WAEPS and the WSMA over the past few weeks regarding a legislative proposal from the Optometric Physicians of Washington (OPW) expanding optometrists' scope of practice. The Department of Health (DOH) has undertaken a statutorily required Sunrise Review to determine the public need, safety and cost of the OPW proposal. Ultimately the DOH will make a recommendation to the Legislature, and legislation based on this will be considered in January. The Legislature may choose to ignore part or all of the recommendations. The DOH draft response was largely *in favor of the OPW proposal*. WAEPS has provided an extensive rebuttal to the DOH Sunrise Review Draft.

The language in the proposed OPW bill would make Washington only the 8th state to grant laser surgery and the 10th to grant scalpel eyelid surgery privileges to optometrists.

Did you know that only 2 of 23 optometry schools are in states where optometric laser / scalpel eye surgery is permitted and therefore taught on live patients? That means that >95% of graduating optometrists have never used any of these techniques outside of the lab on live patients. Despite this very disturbing fact, optometrists and the DOH appear to believe that optometrists are qualified to perform scalpel and laser surgeries on patients after a supplementary 32-hour course based out of Oklahoma. ***Let me repeat: they would be permitted to do laser and scalpel surgery on the eye after a long weekend course.***

The proposed OPW bill would:

- **Remove the prohibition on optometrists performing ophthalmic surgery**
- Specifically permit:
  - **YAG capsulotomy**
  - **SLT**
  - **LPI**
  - **Scalpel eyelid surgery**
  - **Paracentesis** of the anterior chamber to lower eye pressure
  - **Injections** of all medicines by all routes, including periorcular/subconj/subTenon's
  - **Steroid** medications by all routes
- Give the **Board of Optometry sole authority over optometric scope of practice** and education requirements to achieve that scope.

While there are specific surgeries that are prohibited, many unlisted surgeries could be considered as fair game for future Board of Optometry inclusion.

In its draft response the DOH supports many of the OPW requests and stated that "they [optometrists] should be allowed to practice to the full extent of their training." WAEPS along with the AAO, WSMA, and the entire house of medicine are vehemently opposed to the OPW proposal.

Friends and colleagues, the time has come. WE NEED YOUR HELP. Without your participation our mission to stand up for patient safety will surely fail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Weingeist', written in a cursive style.

Aaron Weingeist, MD  
WAEPS Legislative Chair