

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2079

As of March 26, 2001

Title: An act relating to authorizing dispensing opticians to perform eye refraction and modify existing prescriptions to reflect changes in vision.

Brief Description: Creating a program to certify refracting opticians.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Health Care (originally sponsored by Representatives Schual-Berke and Campbell).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care:

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Staff: Joan Mell (786-7447)

Background: Dispensing opticians are licensed as a health profession by the Department of Health to fit and dispense contact and eyeglass lenses upon the written prescription of physicians and optometrists. Opticians fabricate eyeglass lenses, as well as measure and adapt contact lenses and eyeglasses to the human face.

Current law does not authorize dispensing opticians to modify prescriptions.

The Dispensing Optician Examining Committee is composed of three members who are licensed dispensing opticians.

Summary of Bill: A dispensing optician may apply to the Secretary of Health for an endorsement as a refracting optician for the purposes of modifying prescriptions as specified in this act. Qualifications for obtaining an endorsement include completion of 80 hours of accredited course work; performing at least 200 hours of supervised refractive eye examinations; completion of a continuing education requirement; and passage of an examination.

Refracting is defined as a means of measuring the powers or range of a person's vision to determine the degree of correction.

Prescription modification is defined as the ability to alter a prescription with a cumulative plus or minus 2.00 diopter of change, with only 1.00 diopter of change during a six-month period.

Only those patients who have had an eye examination within the last two years may have their prescriptions modified, but children ten years of age or under or adults 65 years of age or older may not have their prescriptions modified. A patient must sign a disclosure statement recognizing that a prescription modification is not, nor does it replace, an eye examination.

In modifying a prescription, the optician must notify the original prescriber within 14 days of any modifications. Refracting opticians must refer patients to an optometrist or ophthalmologist if the optician is unable to select specified lenses or observe changes in power of either eye.

The Dispensing Optician Examining Committee is increased from three to five members, of which four members are licensed opticians and one is a representative of the public.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 19, 2001.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed, except for Sections 2, 4, 5, 6 and 8 which take effect July 1, 2002.