



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS
STRONG MEDICINE FOR AMERICA

May 27, 2014

The Honorable Bobby Jindal
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9004

Dear Governor Jindal:

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), representing over 115,900 physicians and medical students nationwide, and our state chapter, the Louisiana Academy of Family Physicians, which represents over 1,600 active physicians, I am writing to urge you to veto House Bill 1065 (HB 1065) and its Senate companion Senate Bill 568 (SB 568), which deals with the practice of optometry and the regulation of the profession. This legislation would expand the non-physician optometry scope of practice to include scalpel and laser surgery and injections. This proposal also would further fracture an already fragmented health care system, divert attention from the establishment and implementation of team-based care models, and potentially lower the quality of care for thousands of Louisianans. The AAFP opposes legislation that would allow mid-level providers without adequate medical education and training to practice medicine outside of the scope of that training.

Fragmentation Is Costly and Dangerous

There is no question that our health care system is complex. The current system is fraught with costly duplication, much of which is a direct result of the fragmentation that already exists. To address the quality problems and inefficiencies created by this fragmentation of health care delivery, the AAFP stresses the use of physician-led, patient-centered medical care teams. The AAFP has been one of the earliest supporters of the Patient Centered Medical Home model of care, because it requires physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, and other allied members of the health care team, including optometrists, to coordinate their care to ensure better quality and more efficient health care.

HB 1065 and companion bill SB 568 specifically would authorize non-physician optometrists to perform a wide variety of eye surgeries using multiple methods and instruments including scalpels, lasers, needles, ultrasound, ionizing radiation and by burning and freezing tissue. The legislation would also allow optometrists to inject medications into the eyelid and tissues very close to the eyeball. Optometrists do not have the education or training to perform these procedures, or manage the complications that can arise from these procedures. Additionally, this legislation removes oversight of ophthalmic surgery from the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners (LSBME). Currently, any person performing ophthalmic surgery must be licensed to practice medicine by the LSBME. This legislation vitiates that standard practice and consigns licensing and regulatory authority to the state optometry board, thus allowing non-physicians to determine who can perform ophthalmic surgery.

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The AAFP believes that optometrists are well-respected professionals in their field, but this legislation would inappropriately expand their scope of practice beyond their education and training. We respectfully urge you to veto HB 1065/SB 568.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have questions or need further information from the AAFP, please do not hesitate to contact Michelle Greenhalgh, Manager of State Government Relations, at mgreenhalgh@aafp.org or (202) 232-9033.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Cain', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeffrey J. Cain, MD, FAAFP
Board Chair