

APRIL 23, 2009

OKLAHOMA: MORE ON PROPOSED BOARD CERTIFICATION

April 14, 2009

Pete Kehoe, O.D., President
American Optometric Association
243 N. Lindbergh Blvd.
St. Louis, MO 63141

Dear Dr. Kehoe,

Greetings from the Oklahoma Association of Optometric Physicians. We wish to communicate to you and the Joint Board Certification Project Team as well as the American Optometric Association our appreciation for the work to bring this credentialing project to its current position. In addition the Board of Directors of the OAOP wishes to convey our support of the JBCPT model for establishing a board and the process to attain board certification for Optometry

At our recent Spring Congress, the Board of Directors informed the membership that they were in favor of this process continuing in its development and implementation. With that leadership support, the membership also gave its approval for continuing the assessment process. OAOP member and JBCPT member Dr. David Cockrell gave a thorough presentation that addressed inaccurate information and answered our member's questions and concerns. Our state association video taped this session and makes it available to OAOP members on the OAOP website at www.aaop.org along with this letter in support.

This issue raises healthy debate in our profession. It is apparent that significant attention was given to the input of many and this has resulted in a sound and well established plan. Board certification for Optometrists is a necessary but nonetheless, historical step for the profession of Optometry. As health care begins to adopt value driven models, credentialing and certification of all physicians endure a higher level of scrutiny. So at this moment in time it is crucial that our actions keep Optometry current and relevant by implementing a board certification process.

It is our position that board certification is a means to more adequately place the profession of Optometry in an equal plain with other health care professions. By proceeding with this project, optometrists are in a better position to be equitably recognized and compensated for the high quality eye care that we provide. Board certification is recognized by the public as a measure of physician competency and the lack of a board certification process could eliminate optometrists as eligible providers. The proposed model is a voluntary process that allows all doctors the opportunity to

Achieve certification while showing continued competency in constantly evolving medical field. The model proposed creates an achievable, yet credible certification process.

Some state optometric governing bodies have raised questions regarding the specifics of this process. We understand that there will need to be continued dialogue and considerations made about concerns and implications of board certification. This is all part of an intentional process which requires many groups, organizations and leaders to collectively build a satisfactory model which enables every doctor to provide the necessary validation of professional competence and patient care. Though there will be questions to be answered and challenges to overcome we are sure that the JBCPT and AOA leadership will work diligently to provide an efficient and professional approach to implementation of the certification process so that each optometrist in the country can be dedicated to practicing at the highest levels possible.

As Oklahoma Optometrists we urge Optometrists of all states to recognize the need for board certification for the future and viability of our profession. We also hope the proposal created by the JBCPT will garner the support it deserves. Please count on Oklahoma to support board certification as a necessary step to enable our state and the nation to remain at the frontlines of our profession.

Sincerely,

Russell Hopkins, O.D.
Oklahoma Association of Optometric Physicians
President 2009-2010