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February 18, 2026

The Honorable Joseph Cervantes
Chair, Judiciary Committee
New Mexico Senate
490 Old Santa Fe Trail
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Dear Chairman Cervantes,

On behalf of the more than 17,000 U.S. members of the American Academy of Dermatology Association (AADA), we urge you to oppose HB 213. This legislation jeopardizes patient safety because it would lower the standards of eye care by authorizing optometrists to perform surgical procedures using lasers who have not completed the necessary medical education and surgical training to safely perform these delicate procedures.

Dermatologists diagnose and treat more than 3,000 diseases, including skin cancer, psoriasis, immunologic diseases and many genetic disorders. As physicians who are on the front lines fighting skin cancer and treating numerous skin diseases, we often refer our patients to an ophthalmologist if there are signs of an eye disease.

Surgical procedures constitute the practice of medicine and surgery; it is not the practice of optometry. The practice of cutaneous medicine includes, but is not limited to, performing any act or procedure that, by its intended or improper use, can alter or cause biologic change or damage living tissue. This includes skin excisions, the use of all lasers, light sources, the injection or insertion of foreign or natural substances, or soft tissue augmentation. We maintain a steadfast position that these procedures should be performed only by a licensed physician or under the direct, onsite supervision of a physician.

Optometric training does not prepare optometrists to perform medical and surgical procedures. Optometry school focuses on basic eye care services like eye exams/refractions and contact lens fitting. Authorizing the practice of laser surgery for those who bypassed

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thousands hours of medical education, clinical and surgical experience is in no way a solution to ensure access to the safest patient care that New Mexicans deserve.

Quality care includes evaluating a patient's needs and current condition, selecting an appropriate course of treatment, and providing adequate information and follow-up care. Optometrist training is limited in depth and scope and is not equivalent to a physician's extensive education or mastery performing medical procedures. Further, any surgical procedure faces the potential for complications from known or unknown causes or underlying, serious medical conditions. When complications occur, the patient deserves and expects to be treated by someone with the medical, clinical and surgical knowledge and experience to manage those complications to ensure the best possible patient outcome.

In order to protect the patients of New Mexico, we urge you to oppose HB 213. We appreciate the opportunity to provide written comments on this issue. For further information, please contact Lisa Albany, director of state policy for the AADA, at LAlbany@aad.org or (202) 712-2615.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Karry La Violette", followed by a horizontal line.

Karry La Violette
Senior Vice President, Advocacy and Policy
American Academy of Dermatology Association