

The House Committee on Insurance offers the following substitute to HB 235:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 30 of Title 43 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
2 optometrists, so as to revise the definition of optometry; to remove the exemption for
3 continuing education requirements for persons practicing optometry who are 65 years of age
4 or older; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

6 **SECTION 1.**

7 Chapter 30 of Title 43 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to optometrists,
8 is amended in Code Section 43-30-1, relating to definitions, by revising paragraph (2) as
9 follows:

10 "(2)(A) 'Optometry' means the art and science of visual care and is declared to be a
11 learned profession. The practice of optometry consists of the diagnosis and
12 interpretation of the visual behavior of the human organism by the employment of any
13 means other than surgery. The practice of optometry further consists of the correction
14 of visual anomalies through the prescribing, employment, and use of lenses, prisms,
15 frames, mountings, contact lenses, orthoptic exercises, and visual training, light
16 frequencies, and any other means or methods for the relief, correction, or remedy of any
17 insufficiencies or abnormal conditions of the human visual organism, other than
18 surgery. Optometrists are prohibited from using nondiagnostic lasers. Nothing in this
19 chapter shall prohibit the use, administration, or prescription of pharmaceutical agents
20 for diagnostic purposes and treatment of ocular disease in the practice of optometry by
21 optometrists who have received pharmacological training and certification from a
22 properly accredited institution of higher learning and who are certified by the board to
23 use pharmaceutical agents for diagnostic and treatment purposes. Only a doctor of
24 optometry who:

25 (i) Is already certified for using pharmaceutical agents for diagnostic purposes;

26 (ii) Has passed or passes an examination approved by the board which tests
27 knowledge of pharmacology for treatment and management of ocular diseases;

28 (iii) Is certified in coronary pulmonary resuscitation (CPR); and

29 (iv) Maintains at least \$1 million in malpractice insurance coverage

30 shall be certified to use pharmaceutical agents for treatment purposes.

31 (B) The board shall establish by rule a list, which may be modified from time to time,
32 of pharmaceutical agents which optometrists shall be allowed to use for treatment
33 purposes.

34 (C) A doctor of optometry shall not administer any pharmaceutical agent by injection.

35 (D) Pharmaceutical agents which are used by a doctor of optometry for treatment
36 purposes and administered orally may only be:

37 (i)(I) Nonnarcotic oral analgesics and hydrocodone and Schedule III or Schedule
38 IV controlled substances which are oral analgesics;

39 (II) Used for ocular pain; and

40 (III) Used for no more than 72 hours without consultation with the patient's
41 physician; provided, however, that with respect to hydrocodone, used for no more
42 than 48 hours without consultation with the patient's physician; or

43 (ii) ~~Oral and topical antibiotics,~~ Antibiotics, antivirals, ~~topical~~ steroids, antifungals,
44 antihistamines, or antiglaucoma agents related to the diagnosis or treatment of
45 diseases and conditions of the eye and adnexa oculi except Schedule I or Schedule II
46 controlled substances; provided, however, that a doctor of optometry shall not be
47 authorized to administer pharmaceutical agents by injection. Doctors of optometry
48 using such ~~oral and topical~~ pharmaceutical agents shall be held to the same standard
49 of care imposed by Code Section 51-1-27 as would be applied to a physician licensed
50 under Chapter 34 of this title performing similar acts; provided, however, that a
51 doctor of optometry shall not be authorized to treat systemic diseases.

52 (E) Pharmaceutical agents which are used by a doctor of optometry for treatment
53 purposes and administered topically shall be subject to the following conditions only
54 when used for the treatment of glaucoma:

55 (i) If the pharmaceutical agent is a beta blocker, an optometrist certified to use
56 pharmaceutical agents for treatment purposes must take a complete case history and
57 determine whether the patient has had a physical examination within the past year.
58 If the patient has not had such a physical examination or if the patient has any history
59 of congestive heart failure, bradycardia, heart block, asthma, or chronic obstructive
60 pulmonary disease, that patient must be referred to a person licensed under Chapter
61 34 of this title for examination prior to initiating beta blocker therapy;

62 (ii) If the glaucoma patient does not respond to the topically administered
 63 pharmaceutical agents after 60 days of treatment, that patient must be referred to an
 64 ophthalmologist; and

65 (iii) If the patient is diagnosed as having closed angle glaucoma, the patient shall be
 66 immediately referred to an ophthalmologist; and

67 (iv) If the pharmaceutical agent is oral steroids, an optometrist certified to use
 68 pharmaceutical agents for treatment purposes must take a complete case history and
 69 determine whether the patient has had a physical examination within the past year and
 70 must not prescribe oral steroids for any condition for which oral steroids are
 71 contraindicated.

72 (F) Doctors of optometry using pharmaceutical agents for treatment purposes shall be
 73 held to the same standard of care imposed by Code Section 51-1-27 as would be applied
 74 to a physician licensed under Chapter 34 of this title performing similar acts.

75 (G) Any doctor of optometry who uses a pharmaceutical agent, except under the
 76 conditions specified therefor by this chapter and any other law, shall be guilty of a
 77 misdemeanor unless a greater penalty is otherwise provided by law.

78 (H) Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to allow a doctor of optometry to
 79 dispense pharmaceutical agents to patients."

80

SECTION 2.

81 Said chapter is further amended in Code Section 43-30-8, relating to biennial registration,
 82 educational programs for optometrists, forfeiture of certificate upon failure to comply, and
 83 reinstatement of certificate, by revising subsection (b) as follows:

84 "(b) The board may approve educational programs to be held within or outside this state.
 85 The board shall approve only such educational programs as are available to all persons
 86 practicing optometry in the state on a reasonable nondiscriminatory fee basis. Any request
 87 for board approval of an educational program shall be submitted in a timely manner with
 88 due regard for the necessity of investigation and consideration by the board. The board may
 89 contract with institutions of higher learning, professional organizations, or qualified
 90 individuals for the providing of programs that meet this requirement; and such programs
 91 shall be self-sustaining by the individual fees set and collected by the provider of the
 92 program. The minimum number of hours of continuing education required shall be fixed
 93 by the board by February 1 of each calendar year. In no instance may the board require a
 94 greater number of hours of study than are available at approved courses held within the
 95 state; and the board is authorized to waive this requirement in cases of certified illness or
 96 undue hardship. ~~Continuing education requirements fixed by the board pursuant to this~~
 97 ~~chapter shall not apply to persons practicing optometry who are 65 or more years of age."~~

98

SECTION 3.

99 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.