

one agree wholeheartedly with you that such regulation is indeed a matter for careful consideration by this subcommittee and the House District Committee.

As you know, I have had concern in this area for some time, and introduced a bill last year, as well as H.R. 595 in this Congress, for the purpose of correcting the present antiquated 1924 District of Columbia Optometry Law. My bill, I might add, Mr. Chairman, is virutally identical to your bill, H.R. 1283.

I asked the Library of Congress to supply us with a point by point comparison of H.R. 595 and the existing District Optometry Law. Careful study of that comparison has convinced me of the need for passage of a revised optometry law at the earliest possible moment.

Our foremost consideration should be the good of the public. I would like to submit for the record the Library of Congress analysis of H.R. 595 for the Committee's reference.

To quote briefly from this analysis:

... H.R. 595 would substantially modify the present provisions of 2-501-522 of the District of Columbia Code. The purpose of the modifications is the imposition of exacting requirements over the profession and practice of optometry in the District of Columbia.

The comparison further points out that the present law concerns itself primarily with establishment of a Board of Optometry whose principal functions are the conduct of examinations for licensure to practice optometry and the conduct of hearings to revoke, cancel or suspend licenses. The Library of Congress report also states, "H.R. 595 makes substantial improvements on a Code which has not been significantly amended since its enactment on May 28, 1924 (43 Stat. 177)."

The comparison notes, one of the effects of these various amendments, particularly the definition of the term "the practice of optometry", is to take the adaptation and fitting of contact lenses out of the hands of opticians and placing it exclusively in the hands of physicians and licensed optometrists.

The Library of Congress summarizes the need for a new law. It says:

Significant effects of the bill's provisions setting up a code of conduct and defining unlawful acts with respect to the practice of optometry are: (1) the elimination of price-cost and other bait advertising techniques and practices; (2) the elimination of fee-splitting, rebating or other commission arrangements offered as inducements to obtain patronage; (3) the guarantee of an absolute freedom of choice of a practitioner on the part of the person needing the services of an optometrist with respect to the administration of any law of the District of Columbia; (4) the confinement of advertising of professional services to modest professional cards and announcements, and to modest street or window signs at the place of business; (5) the confinement of the practice of optometry to a professional office by prohibiting its practice in retail, mercantile or commercial stores or premises that are not exclusively devoted to the practice of optometry or other health professions.

This general description clearly outlines the need for and intent of H.R. 595 or similar legislation which we will consider today.

The comparison also points out that no provision in the bill would work to abolish the Board of Optometry. The District Commissioners could continue to delegate all or any part of their powers and authority to such a Board upon whatever terms and conditions as may appear necessary and proper.