

Dr. CHAPMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and my thanks also to my Congressman, Don Fuqua, and to Mr. Jacobs, for being here.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee No. 5 of the House District Committee: It is a pleasure to appear before you today to speak in support of H.R. 1283 and H.R. 12276.

As the Chairman has indicated, I do have a full statement which has been submitted for the record with attachments.

The purpose of the bill is simple. It elevates the practice of optometry in the District of Columbia to the level of a profession as recognized in all other states and territories of our Union. By so doing, it takes away from the unlicensed, the unqualified and the unscrupulous the power to use the license of an optometrist for selfish profit-motivated purposes. It also places some limits on those who would lure the public to a commercial establishment for the primary purpose of selling a pair of glasses at a profit.

Those who oppose this bill do so because it limits their ability to make a gain from the practice of optometry. I submit, Mr. Chairman, that the usual rule of the market place should not apply to the practice of optometry.

The consumer finds it far more difficult to judge the quality of the health service he receives than the quality of other types of services and products of the market place. He usually has only a vague and often erroneous understanding of the kind of optometric service he needs, and a very inadequate basis for judging the quality of the service he receives.

The end product of optometric service—good vision—is essential to the every day work, education and pleasure of the consumer. Mr. Chairman, eyeglasses have no resale value to a consumer as have most commercial products. Their value is unique and individual to the consumer and tied to the quality of the examination and prescription which lies within them. Any possible other value would have to lie in the precious metal content of the frame or in any valuable stones that might be imbedded in the frame.

Earlier this year, in optometry, statement to the Senate Subcommittee on Anti-Trust and Monopoly holding hearings on "Medical Restraint of Trade," we agreed with the view that a doctor should not profit from the sale of products to patients. The Association's "Manual of Professional Practice for the American Optometrist" states: "The optometrists' records should show clearly that his net income is based on fees for professional service, not on markup of ophthalmic materials." We challenge any of those opposing this legislation either last year or this to show that they have a comparable policy.

There are those opposing this bill who have said that Section 7 is unobjectionable because it restricts only the optometrists in the District. They oppose, however, any restrictions contained in other parts of the bill. If it is important to regulate optometrists in the practice of optometry, how much more important it is that regulation be adopted for those who do not have the training given in optometric schools and colleges. They are not examined or licensed as are our members.