

Dr. ALPER. I am the President of the Section on Ophthalmology of the Medical Society of the District of Columbia. The Medical Society of the District of Columbia is the only Medical Society ever chartered by Act of Congress and it is the oldest scientific organization chartered by Congress, having been founded in 1617.

It consists of 2,533 members and most of the membership is very much alarmed about the numerous features of H.R. 1283 and related bills.

Mr. SISK. Dr. Alper, if I could just stop you for a moment. Have you by any chance had an opportunity to peruse H.R. 12276?

Dr. ALPER. Yes, sir.

Mr. SISK. My reason for asking is that there have been some changes in H.R. 1283, and in almost every instance they were made at the instigation of ophthalmologists and others of the medical profession. This was an effort to clarify the language as it concerned medical people.

I wanted to call that to the attention of the committee and to you. We were hopeful that to some extent these changes would solve some of your problems.

Dr. ALPER. The Medical Society of the District of Columbia recognizes the fact that optometry plays a role in the vision care of this community. We take no issue with the optometrists' efforts to improve their educational standards or to discipline their own members. In fact, we stand ready to support these laudable pursuits. However, one must not lose sight of the fact that optometry's role, by education and training, is of necessity a limited one and any proposed legislation dealing with this subject must be kept in proper perspective if the public interest is to be served.

We feel that if any of these bills are enacted, it will in effect amend the Healing Arts Practice Act which would definitely not be in the public interest and which we believe would not be the intent of this committee.

Our state of alarm is not solely limited to those of us who are ophthalmologists, but is shared by all members of our District of Columbia Medical Society, regardless of their specialty, status or field of interest, because certain points of the amended bill, over the former 1283 bill, point out that any of our nurses or technicians, in recording a patient's visual acuity, visual field or other technical tasks for which they are trained and which the Healing Arts Practice Act now provides, would be limited in doing these by use of the term "direct supervision." These bills would also grossly interfere with or eliminate some of the vital activities of our local hospitals' eye clinics.

The Department of Public Health, the school-screening programs and the eye departments of Georgetown University Medical Center, George Washington University School of Medicine and Howard University School of Medicine. The professors and deans of the above-mentioned institutions were so concerned about this that we formed a subcommittee of university professors and Dr. Claude Cowan, who is professor and chairman of the Department of Ophthalmology at Howard University, was appointed as the chairman of this subcommittee.

He was here but unfortunately has been called away because of an emergency operation and I have his joint statement which I will submit, if this is all right with you, sir.

Mr. SISK. Without objection, his statement will be made a part of the record immediately following your statement.