

Mr. Chairman, if you will return to the statement filed, and also given verbally by Marvin Berlin, ODS, he tells us on the very first page of this statement that there are "67 full-time practicing optometrists here in the District of Columbia and they serve a population, according to the Census, of 763,956 persons."

Mr. Chairman, according to the official survey made by the American Academy of Ophthalmology and appearing in the American Journal of Optometry, prepared by two ophthalmologists—and I will leave this with the committee—the ratio of optometrists to serve the public is adequate if it is one to twelve thousand persons.

Now, when you utilize the figure 67 and compare it with 763,956, you will find that the number of optometrists serving the population of Washington according to Optometry's figures is more than adequate.

I quote from the American Journal on Optometry, June, 1967 Report, Mr. Chairman. It reads as follows:

"The ratio of one to 12,000 is adequate in civilian life at the present time," June 1967.

A statement was made by Dr. Chapman that ophthalmologists generally throughout the United States are tending to become dispensing ophthalmologists and fit contact lenses and eyeglasses. This is not so and testimony was adduced before the Hart Committee to this effect. The facts are that 42 per cent of all physicians in ophthalmology include the service of fitting eyeglasses in their practice, while 58 delegates the fitting to the optician.

This figure, Mr. Chairman, has been constant over ten to twenty years, and there is no trend which medicine knows today of ophthalmologists increasing in the fitting of eyeglasses or contact lenses.

Let us take the District of Columbia. You have 67 full-time optometrists operating in the District of Columbia according to Optometry's figures. We have over 120 ophthalmologists operating in the District of Columbia.

Mr. Chairman, only one or two ophthalmologists that we know in the District of Columbia actually prescribe and fit. In other words, the fitting of all glasses and contact lenses in this area is performed by the opticians and by the optometrists themselves. So we know of no economic impact that is being visited upon these 67 optometrists who are practicing optometry in the District of Columbia.

This bill, 1283 and related bills, obviously was designed and prepared, I think, as the representatives of optometry have stated to this committee, to elevate and to make the practice of optometry a profession. Also, it is in keeping with the declared policy of the American Optometric Association to see what they call eye or visual care is conducted only by optometrists and I think a reading of the bill will show this, just as the representative from Labor testified, Mr. Chairman.

The definitions in the bill do carry optometrists into the field of medicine. The attempt to equate optometry with the profession of ophthalmology raises serious legal problems. I won't go into great detail because I discussed this with your committee at the last hearing, Mr. Sisk, but the Commissioners have informed this committee last year and this year that everything asked for in these types of legislation can be given by the Commissioners under existing legislation