

folks. I feel to the extent that you recognize this fact and help to upgrade, let us say, allied or associated agencies of the profession; to that extent the public is certainly going to be served.

I often think how long it was in my own State of California that the medical profession looked down on osteopaths. Yet today they are practicing side by side in the same hospitals. We are not attempting to put optometrists into medicine. We are attempting to the extent optometrists have a responsibility in the visual care of our people, to see to it that they perform those functions and perform them to the best possible extent.

Gentlemen, thank you very much for your appearance here today. We appreciate your testimony and I assure you that the statements put in the record will be considered.

Mr. MAGEE. Mr. Sisk, may I make one statement for the record? In your prior bill, H.R. 12937, which is similar to H.R. 1283 submitted last year to organized medicine for their review, I don't know if you were aware of this. It was submitted to the House of Delegates of the American Medical Association last June. The House of Delegates voted that organized medicine should oppose his bill. It does put optometrists into the practice of medicine.

Mr. SISK. Let me say that having served on the Veterans' Affairs Committee for a good many years and on the Hospital Subcommittee, I recognize and I have great respect for the medical profession, but I feel we have to open our minds and pride up a little bit at a time. You know what I mean.

I appreciate your stand and I have very many fine friends in the medical profession. I recognize there are differences of opinion. We take these steps one at a time and we gain in the long run.

Mr. MAGEE. Mr. Chairman, I might say this matter has been given thorough review by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. You have quoted Dr. Lee. I think we should go to the Commissioner of Social Security, Mr. Robert M. Ball, who has carefully put the optometrists into the proper perspective. We say in the health field. I would like to submit their report regarding how optometrists should be used in the health-care field into this record as a next exhibit.

Mr. SISK. Without objection, the report will be made a part of the record.

(The report follows:)

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE, SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION, OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

REPORT REGARDING THE COVERAGE OF EYE CARE UNDER THE HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

*Background*

Section 1862(a)(7) of the law excludes from coverage routine physical checkups, eyeglasses, or eye examinations for the purpose of prescribing, fitting, or changing eyeglasses without regard to whether these services are furnished by a physician or by another practitioner. The term "physician" as defined for medicare purposes, includes a doctor of medicine or osteopathy legally authorized to practice medicine and surgery by the State in which he performs such function or action. An ophthalmologist is a "physician" specializing in the diseases of the eye. Optometrists, however, are not included within the scope of the statutory definition of the term "physician," since they are not legally authorized to practice medicine and surgery.