

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



## CALIFORNIA STATE BOARD OF OPTOMETRY



### Advocating for Californians Across the State

March 2018

What unites this Board is a fierce commitment to achieve quality eye care for all Californians – in every corner, and all across our Golden State. We work to establish and maintain fair and just laws that provide for the protection of consumer health and safety and reflect current and emerging, efficient and cost-effective practices. Over 60 years ago, in a California that had a population of 10.6 million vs. today's nearly 40 million residents, laws were passed that were specific for the period of time.

Today, however, in a California that has a population four times what it had in the 50's and residents living in remote areas as well as dense cities, once well-meaning laws have outlived their usefulness as currently written. In at least one case, a State law restricting the number of Branch Office Licenses is likely impeding the ability to provide access to quality eye care to all Californians. It's time for this to be addressed and we are stepping up as a collective Board to do so by advocating to sunset the Branch Office Licenses law and allow optometrists to have ownership in more than two practice locations.

As we have heard from our professional members and colleagues, Californians in underserved rural and urban communities throughout the State have few vision care options. Those who rely on Medi-Cal, for example, may not be getting the prescribed care they need simply because of where they live. Californians in remote or small communities in the Sierra Nevada mountains, Lake County and High Desert may not be able to access quality eye care – all because optometrists who want to serve them cannot if they already have two offices registered with the State Board. And, they are not alone. Patients with glaucoma or other eye diseases requiring follow-up visits and regular monitoring of their condition may be going without prescribed care.

It is hard to believe that in this day and age, some of our communities have no vision care services and in some areas, residents are required to drive 40, 60 miles or even 100+ miles to find a provider who accepts their insurance.

It is this commitment to serve our State and advocate for access to quality eye care that is driving our support to repeal the Branch Offices License law this session and not delay. It's the right action to take and it would be in line with how other Department of Consumer Affairs Boards treat the number of offices allowed by law in other essential medical practices. As stated in the past, yet it cannot be repeated enough, thank you for your volunteer hours as we advance consumer protection.

Cyd Brandvein, President

David Turetsky, OD, Vice President