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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2403

October 6, 2022

The Honorable Denis McDonough
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Room 1063B
Washington, D.C. 20402

Dear Secretary McDonough:

Thank you for your service to our nation's Veterans. I am writing to you regarding Veterans' access to needed medical eye care services provided by community doctors of optometry acting within the bounds of their state scope of practice.

My understanding is that Mississippi Veterans are unable to receive this care based on language in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Office of Community Care Standardized Episodes of Care (SEOC) guidelines stating that "*only ophthalmologists can perform invasive procedures, including injections, lasers, and eye surgery.*" As Mississippi's existing scope of practice laws allow optometrists to perform these procedures, I am concerned about the impact of this policy on the ability for Veterans to receive needed care in our state.

Under the VA MISSION Act, Veterans are eligible to seek care from health care practitioners in their community acting within the bounds of their state scope of practice. Doctors of optometry in Mississippi are already authorized to provide "invasive" care, including injections, removal of foreign bodies, and therapeutic laser eye procedures. Medicare, Medicaid, the Indian Health Service, and all major private payers already cover and reimburse doctors of optometry for providing these services.

To ensure consistency with existing state scope of practice laws and access to needed eye care for Veterans, I ask for your review of new language in the SEOC Coordination of Care Template. Thank you for your consideration of this request, consistent with applicable state laws and best medical practices. Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Michael Guest
Member of Congress

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