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## New Website

The website of the Board of Examiners in Optometry has had a face-lift.

*Do It*, the Maryland Department of Information Technology, has established guidelines for the standardization of all Maryland State Government websites. As you connect with state government agencies to access their websites, you will notice the uniformity and ease of access. The updated sites are not only more user-friendly but also promote better access for mobile devices. Visit the Board's site today at [dhmh.maryland.gov/optometry](http://dhmh.maryland.gov/optometry). The Board welcomes any comments or feedback about the newly designed site, its content and functionality.

## Board Meetings

The Regular Session of Board meetings are open to the public and held at



Top, left to right: Ari Elbaum, Board Counsel, Dr. Frederick Walsh, Ph.D., Brian Woolf, O.D., Kecia Dunham, Licensing Coordinator, Patricia Bennett, Executive Director. Seated, left to right: Phyllis, Strickland, O.D., Board President, Andrew Doyle, O.D., Rona Pepper, and Mesheca Bunyon, O.D.

## President's Address

I would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year! I hope that 2016 is a year filled with peace, prosperity and happiness.

As 2015 has ended, the Board starts this year with a lot of activity, beginning with its review of Board regulations. During this process, the Board will review and amend some of its regulations, however, the Board does not have the authority to change its statute. Statutory changes result from the passage of legislation. Many changes are addressed and initiated by the MOA (Maryland Optometric Association), through their legislative initiatives. The Board encourages all members to become an active participant with the MOA to bring about effective change within the profession for the State of Maryland.

the Metro Executive Building,  
4201 Patterson Ave,  
Baltimore, MD 21215  
at 9:30 a.m.

The schedule is as follows:

Wed. Jan. 27, 2016-

Cancelled

Wed. Mar. 30, 2016

Wed. May 25, 2016

Wed. July 27, 2016

Wed. Sept. 28, 2016

Wed. Nov. 30, 2016

Licensed optometrists can attend public meetings of the Board and receive continuing education credit.

## The Board Gets Parliamentary Procedures Training



Recently the Board celebrated 100 years of Excellence. Over the past 100 years, the optometric profession has changed significantly not only in new technologies, but also in the diversity of our patient population. The Census Bureau predicts major shifts in the U.S. population. Our population will become more diverse and older in the years to come. Around 2020, more than half of the nation's children are expected to be part of a minority race or ethnic group. This agency also states that the overall U.S. population will grow older, with the number of elderly Americans, surging to become nearly the most populous segment of society. So how do these changes affect how we practice? Each of us represents a blend of cultures that are determined by the collective and diverse experiences of our age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, education, religion, socioeconomic status, geographic residence, and even our occupation or profession. Cultural diversity, introduces an unexpected paradigm to traditional ophthalmic care. Our ultimate goal as optometrists is to provide a spectrum of healthcare which is patient-centered and fosters a climate of respect of cultural norms and beliefs for all our patients.

With the advent of social media, automated on-line exams, new technology and the changing diversity of our patients, we have a lot of work ahead of us in the years to come.... Are we ready for these changes in patient encounters and technology?

In closing, I would like to thank past Board Presidents, Thomas Azman, O.D. and Jo Anne Brilliant, O.D., who served as great role models and mentors.

In addition, I want to thank the current practitioner Board members who assist me in carrying out the Board's charge of protecting the public; Mesheca Bunyon, O.D., Andrew Doyle, O.D., Stephen Kwan, O.D., Brian Woolf, O.D., and consumer members Rona Pepper and Fredrick Walsh, Ph.D.; Board staff, Patricia G. Bennett, M.S.W., Executive Director, Kecia Dunham, Licensing Coordinator, Arthura H. Easter, Office Assistant and Ari Elbaum, Board Counsel, Assistant Attorney General, whose dedication to the Board has advanced the practice and regulation of Optometry in the State of Maryland. I feel confident that I am leaving the Board in capable hands when my tenure ends in May 2016. It has been a pleasure to serve my fellow optometrists and the Board for the past 8 years!

John Tatum, Professional Registered Parliamentarian, National Association of Parliamentarians, provided Board members and staff with Parliamentary Procedures training prior to the regular session Board meeting on November 18, 2015.

## 2016 Online License Renewal

Licensees whose licenses expire on June 30, 2016 will receive a reminder via email from the Board about the renewal process, fees and other requirements. Therefore it is important that the Board has a current email address for all licensees. The online renewal system will be available in April 2016 and will close on June 30, 2016. Licensees can renew from July 1, 2016 through July 31, 2016 by paying an additional \$100.00 late fee.

## Meet the New Board Members



Sincerely,

Phyllis Strickland, M.S., O.D.  
Board President

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## Address of Record/Email Address

Licensees are required by law to maintain a current mailing address of record as well as an email address with the Board. Generally, this information is updated during the renewal process. However, the Board is encouraging licensees who have changed their postal and email addresses since their last renewal cycle, to visit the Board's website [click here](#) to complete a change of address form. In the future, the Board will be communicating with licensees mainly through electronic methods, therefore, a current email address will be required.

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## Paperless Licensure

In an effort to further automate its processes and, more importantly, to prevent the fraudulent use/abuse of paper licenses, the Board transitioned to paperless licensure in 2014. Several Maryland Health Occupation Boards, including the Board of Nursing, have already implemented this practice. The Board will continue to issue an original license (wall certificate) to new licensees, however, the Board will not mail out "renewal licenses/certificates." After you renew your license online, you can visit the Board's website [here](#) and click on License Verification to view and print a copy of your license verification to display or submit to employers, credentialing organizations and insurance companies. An important way to protect the public is to provide an electronic system that verifies licensure. Online verification is free and available 24/7.

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## Board Member Vacancies

MOA is accepting applications through February 26, 2016 for the following Board seats:

2 licensed optometrists



Mesheca Bunyon, O.D.  
Board Member



Rona Pepper  
Consumer Member

Interested candidates should carefully review the criteria AND ensure that all application documents and nomination materials are submitted no later than February 26, 2016.

### **Criteria**

The criteria for members is outlined in the Board statute, Health Occupations §11-202. All Interested candidates must be licensed optometrists. Each optometrist member shall have resided in the State and practiced optometry actively and continuously in this State for at least 5 years before appointment. Terms are for four years and members may not serve more than 2 consecutive full terms.

### **Board member duties**

● Attend six Board meetings per year which are held generally on the last Wednesday of odd numbered months, i.e. January, March.

May, July, September and November. The meetings, (held at the Board office in Baltimore), begin at 9:30 and end at 12:00 noon. The meeting includes a closed and a public (open) session, and members receive a stipend of \$150 per meeting plus mileage. Board members receive documents in advance of the meeting for review. There are attendance requirements in order to remain a board member.

● Serve on Board committees including budget, credentialing, discipline, legislation, continuing education, rehabilitation and ARBO (Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry).

● Participate in disciplinary hearings and case resolution conferences.

● Testify before the General Assembly regarding legislation that affects consumers and/or licensees.

● Approve and monitor continuing education program compliance.

● Investigate complaints against licensees regarding alleged violations of the law and regulations.

● Attend Ad Hoc or Teleconference meetings, convened by the Board President to address special issues.

● File an annual financial disclosure with the State Ethics Commission and be subject to the State Ethics Law.

The Governor appoints the optometrist members with the advice of the Secretary of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, from a list submitted to the Secretary by the Maryland Optometric Association. Please note that all applicants are thoroughly vetted.

## The QEI Committee

### Needs You

The Board and the QEI Committee want to extend sincere thanks to two

members have recently submitted their resignations. Kelliann Dignam, O.D. has served on the committee for 14 years and Elliott Myrowitz, O.D. has been a member for 9 years. Their dedication to the profession, the protection of the public and the highest practice standards is noteworthy. The Board is seeking to fill these vacancies as soon as possible. The quality assurance program includes a record review program, TPA self-assessment surveys and other activities.

As a committee member, you will be expected to attend scheduled meetings, perform peer record reviews, draft educational topics, review adverse reaction reports and other related tasks. Committee members receive a small stipend. Please contact Kecia Dunham, Licensing Coordinator by phone at 410-764-4711 or by email [kecia.dunham@maryland.gov](mailto:kecia.dunham@maryland.gov) to express your interest. The next scheduled meeting will be held on Thursday, April 28, 2016 at 4:00 p.m. at the Board Office, 4201 Patterson Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21215.

To apply, visit [www.marylandoptometry.org](http://www.marylandoptometry.org) or for questions contact Jennifer Levy, MOA Executive Director, at 410-486-9662.

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## Board's Regulations Under Review

In accordance with the Regulatory Review and Evaluation Act (RREA), State Government Article, §10-130-10-139, the Board is required to review any current regulation that has not been newly adopted or comprehensively amended in the past 8 years, or that is not federally mandated. This process enables the Board to be current with the state of optometric practice.

The Regulatory Review process is broken down into two parts. The first part is the Work Plan which basically explains how the review will be done and by whom. The second part is the Evaluation Report which is a form developed by the Division of State Documents that allows the Board to summarize the review and explain any recommended changes.

Throughout this year, the Board will be examining its regulations to evaluate how they align with the Optometry Statute and to make recommendations for changes, revisions and updates. The Regulatory Review Committee will begin its review of several chapters of COMAR (Code of Maryland Regulations) Title 10 Subtitle 28 Board of Examiners in Optometry. Dr. Brian T. Woolf, O.D. chairs the committee. Also serving are Board members Dr. Stephen D. Kwan, O.D., Dr. Frederick J. Walsh, Ph.D. and staff Ari Elbaum, Board Counsel and Patricia G. Bennett, Executive Director.

Committee meetings are open to licensees and the public for comment and notices will be posted on the Board's website and in the Maryland Register. Keep an eye out for emails and updates to stay abreast of the schedule as we make sure that our regulations are ready for 2016 and beyond.

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## Quality Enhancement & Improvement

Andrew Doyle, O.D., Board Member, QEI Chair

The Quality Enhancement and Improvement (QEI) committee recently met to evaluate the records submitted by the 129 therapeutically licensed optometrists audited during this review cycle. Most

Continuing

# Education Credit

The Board accepts continuing education programs that are either Maryland Board approved or COPE approved. Programs are categorized as either general or therapeutic. The following COPE codes are accepted as therapeutic: GL, PO, RS, AS, PS, NO, PH, PD, SD, OP, IS, LP, SP. Review the full text of regulation, COMAR 10.28.02-Continuing Education Requirements. Listed below is a summary of the categories and maximum hours allowed in the two-year license period.

|                                    |          |
|------------------------------------|----------|
| CE Prep and Delivery               | 12 hours |
| Journal or Online with a Post Test | 20 hours |
| Clinical Observation               | 6 hours  |
| CPR                                | 3 hours  |
| Ethics                             | 4 hours  |
| Practice Management                | 4 hours  |
| Pro Bono Work                      | 6 hours  |
| Published Papers                   | 12 hours |
| Public Meeting                     | 4 hours  |



Andrew Doyle, O.D.  
QEI Chair

optometrists audited during this review cycle. Most records met the standard of care. With the advent of electronic medical records (EMR) it appears that many

of the audited optometrists are relying heavily on the pre-filled or default settings of his or hers EMR version. This is understandable given how this improves efficiency and reduces exam length. However, it was often observed that when the record included additional non-default findings, the default normal finding was not adjusted accordingly. For example, an added comment that a cornea had sub-epithelial infiltrate present was incorrectly accompanied by another part of the exam record describing the same eye's cornea as "clear." The QEI committee recommends that optometrists ensure that all aspects of the exam record are consistent and that all default settings be changed to match any added, non-default exam findings.

Another issue that arose during the review of several records was the "72-hour rule." This bit of statute can be found in paragraph two of chapter 11 section 404.2 of Maryland's optometry law. Here it states that if a certified optometrist prescribes a therapeutic agent and the patient does not have the expected response in 72 hours then the optometrist shall consult with an ophthalmologist who may determine whether he or she needs to examine the patient. This rule does not state that an optometrist has to physically examine the patient to determine if the expected response is occurring, however, this is certainly one way to determine that. Other ways to see if the patient is responding as expected are to contact the patient within 72 hours, or educate the patient to contact the office if the condition is not responding accordingly within 72 hours. The QEI committee recommends that each patient record in which a therapeutic agent is utilized include a statement that either the patient will be seen within 72 hours, the patient will be contacted in 72 hours, or that the patient will contact the office if the condition is not responding within 72 hours. The exact wording may vary depending on the severity of the case and expected standard of care of the problem being treated.

Hopefully, these recommendations will assist all optometrists in having more accurate, complete, and statute complying patient records.