

SENATOR REMMERS: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, I support LB 131 and urge the body to support this bill. I've had the privilege of visiting an optometry school. I want to share what I've learned with this Legislature from my viewpoint as a past public school superintendent. I spent over four years visiting with Dr. Tom... I spent over four hours visiting with Dr. Tom Lewis, Dean of Academic Affairs at the Pennsylvania College of Optometry, and Lou Cotania, Director of Post Graduate Education, also at Pennsylvania College of Optometry, about the curriculum. We discussed, in detail, the depth of the course work in the classroom, and in the clinical settings in optometric institutions across the country. Following our discussions, we toured the college and the Eye Institute, a nationally recognized multimillion dollar clinical facility, located on the college campus. We visited the many classroom laboratories where students study the key biomedical sciences, gross anatomy, histology, human physiology, general biochemistry, general and systemic pathology, microbiology, and neuro sciences. I want to make it very clear to this body that these biomedical science courses provide very in depth understanding of the structure and the function of the normal body systems. In addition to basic histo pathological concepts and general pathologies, these same biomedical science courses are being taught in the other health professional schools. A great deal of time is spent learning about systemic diseases of the body. I point this out because we have been told by those opposed to this bill that optometrists only study the eye and work with lenses. I assure you nothing is further from the truth. We toured the labs where optometrists work on cadavers and study the organs of the body. We ended our tour by visiting the Eye Institute. This is one of the finest centers in the United States. While there, I personally visited with many of the faculty, including one of the many ophthalmologists teaching in the school. He felt very comfortable with optometrists doing the treatment procedures in LB 131. I also visited the center in Atlanta, and I found the same high level courses taught, the same in depth detail that these students study. On my return home, I visited an ophthalmology clinic where Pennsylvania College of Optometry students do internship and resident type training. These centers were very much like the center we now have in Omaha. Our optometrists in this state can now get this training in Omaha. They have a very fine facility. I repeat that we