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**To:** Dispensing Optician Committee Members      **Date:** August 18, 2017

**From:** Martha Garcia, CLD, SLD  
 Committee Chair      **Telephone:** (916) 575-7170

**Subject:** **Agenda Item 10 – Presentation and Discussion Regarding the American Board of Opticianry Examination and the National Contact Lens Examination Registrant Pass Rates**

**Background:**

To be registered with the Board as a Spectacle Lens Dispenser (SLD) or a Contact Lens Dispenser (CLD), an applicant must have taken and passed a national examination. Spectacle Lens Dispenser candidates are required to pass the American Board of Opticianry (ABO) examination and Contact Lens Dispenser candidates are required to take and pass the National Contact Lens Examination (NCLE). Both national examinations are developed and administered by the ABO and are available in English and Spanish. The results are neither divided by language nor tracked by first time test takers versus re-takers.

Both examinations are available through computer based testing and can be taken at PSI testing sites around the country. Both tests are two hours each and are available to take during a two-week period, 4 times a year.

In the Board's 2016 Sunset Report, the following pass rates were reported:

<b>National Spectacle Examination</b>		
<b>Developed and Administered By: American Board of Opticianry</b>		
<b>2012</b>	<b># of Candidates</b>	4343
	<b>Pass %</b>	58.3%
<b>2013</b>	<b># of Candidates</b>	3935
	<b>Pass %</b>	62.5%
<b>2014</b>	<b># of Candidates</b>	3473
	<b>Pass %</b>	62.7%
<b>2015</b>	<b># of Candidates</b>	3249
	<b>Pass %</b>	55.0%
Date of Last OA		2013
Name of OA Developer		American Board of Opticianry
Target OA Date		-

National Contact Lens Examination		
Developed and Administered By: National Contact Lens Examiners		
2012	# of Candidates	1496
	Pass %	66.9 %
2013	# of Candidates	1414
	Pass %	53.5%
2014	# of Candidates	1320
	Pass %	56.0%
2015	# of Candidates	1439
	Pass %	56%
Date of Last OA		2013
Name of OA Developer		National Contact Lens Examiners
Target OA Date		-

As a result, the Legislative Committee Staff Recommended the following:

**Staff Recommendation:** *The Board should advise the Committees if it has any concerns with the perceived low passage rate. Additionally, the Board should advise the Committees of when the next OA of these national examinations may occur.*

In response, the Board submitted the following:

**Board Response:** While the pass rates appear low, the Board believes this is due to the lack of educational requirements to become registered in California. Other states that have educational requirements for registration/licensure tend to see higher passing rates, because those candidates appear better prepared for the examination than California candidates.

In addition, the Board contacted the ABO/NCLE's Executive Director regarding the apparent low test scores. He stated:

*"The national pass rate is not "low," inasmuch as it is in keeping with proper testing protocols. The variance, from state to state, is largely based upon educational standards within the state. For example, in Florida, Massachusetts, and Georgia, where the prerequisites to test are much higher, the pass rates are, likewise, much higher. In states or areas where there is no pre-requisite, the pass rate reflects the lack of pre-requisites, and is much lower. However, the overall pass rates, on a national basis, are exactly what they should be, according to the health checks that are periodically conducted on the exams by the independent Psychometric organization that screens our exams. As such, there is no concern on our part with regard to the pass rates. Any higher pass rate would result in concern because if you have too many people pass the examination, questions arise as to whether you are adequately testing what you are intending to screen out. We constantly check the scores against the benchmarks for examinations, and have been advised, repeatedly, that the exam is within standards with regard to every facet, including the pass rate. If we do have an instance where the pass rate for any given examination does not match the standards, we have the ability, prior to announcing scores, to adjust the cut score, based upon recommendations from the Psychometric Experts, and have done so on a few occasions – both increasing the score and decreasing the score."*

Thus, the Board, with the assistance of the Dispensing Optician Committee, is committed to analyzing the registration requirements to determine whether requirements need to be improved so that consumers continue to be protected.

**Presentation by DOC Chair**

Ms. Garcia will present additional research materials regarding the national pass rates and facilitate a discussion on how the DOC can assist in this matter.