



TUESDAY TALK

MARYLAND OPTOMETRY'S QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

News - Events - Products - Services - And More!



Who we are

It's All About VISION



OUR MISSION

The Maryland Optometric Association serves as the voice of optometry in Maryland to protect doctors and their patients. We advocate, educate and connect optometrists by strong advocacy efforts, providing premier educational resources, and engaging events that bring doctors and industry partners together.

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MARYLAND OPTOMETRIC ASSOCIATION

InsEyed Scoop

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President's Report

As we reflect on the past year, I am proud to share the significant strides we have taken. Our Board of Directors, exceptional staff, and generous volunteer members continue to make this a great group to work with each year. Starting off the year, we had a successful White Coat Advocacy Day showing a significant presence in Annapolis. We targeted key legislators, engaging them in short but personal meetings with their MOA doctor constituents. Our short term goal is merely to educate them that ODs are Primary Eye Care Doctors. Our long term goal is of course preparation for the next round of Scope Expansion. Shortly after our Annapolis advocacy, we had a triumphant win in the House killing legislation that would have required ODs to include PD measurements on all eyeglass prescriptions.



Vicky Wong, O.D. *MOA President*

We will continue to proudly represent our members at national, state, and local meetings to advance the three pillars of our own organization: Advocacy, Education, and Networking. A great example is our hybrid CE meeting option that ensure all doctors' education needs and wants continue to be met. Whether we are defeating anti-optometry legislation, providing patient facing public education like solar eclipse safety or meeting with federal Representatives and Senators to ensure fair insurance laws, the MOA is hard at work for you.

Presently, only 42% of Maryland licensed optometrists are MOA members, Imagine what we could accomplish if we joined neighboring states that enjoy a 60–70% licensee-member ratio. I challenge you to reach out to just TWO non-member colleagues as we strive to reach a 51% membership threshold over the next year to truly represent the majority of Maryland optometrists in Annapolis on your behalf! It makes a huge difference when we can tell legislators we represent and fight on behalf of the majority of all licensed optometrists in Maryland. While you're at it, MOA PAC donations are also always welcomed as we prepare for future legislative battles on vision plan abuses, scope modernization, and whatever pops up- like the now defunct PD bill.

Recently, I was honored to be part of the inaugural graduating class of the 2023 AOA Leadership Institute 2.0 program at AOA headquarters in St. Louis this past Fall. I gained extensive insights and plan to carry out the skills I gained from the many seminars I attended including: professional development, public speaking and media training, allyship as a leadership skill, and building relationships with legislators.

As I wrap up the first year of my MOA presidency, I encourage everyone to partake in local society meetings, events like last month's VisionWalk Baltimore and to attend the MOA Fall Convention at the Ashore Hotel in Ocean City.

Don't be a stranger! Stay in touch with MOA leadership and fellow Maryland colleagues virtually on the Maryland OD Forum and MOA Facebook pages and never hesitate to contact us if you have questions or require assistance. We are here, and eager to help! If you are looking to get involved, please reach out and we will find a place for you!





Education Committee Report

My name is Jenny Chan and I am the president of the Greater Baltimore Optometric Society, and am currently serving as Education Co-chair with Dr. Kevin Chan.

We had a blast at the Summer Fun Conference at Great Wolf Lodge during Memorial Day weekend. This was our first family-fun event, providing our Education Program in a half day format to emphasize and encourage a healthy work-life balance at our meetings. Our Annual Convention will mirror this format as well.



Jenny Chan, O.D.

MOA Director

Education Comm Co-Chair

During the Summer Fun Conference, we updated the 10-hour Maryland Certification course, previously created in 2018 after passage of our last scope expansion. DPA doctors and transferees coming to Maryland will now be provided with up-to-date pearls on glaucoma management and oral treatments. We also honored fellow ODs and champions of Maryland Optometry with some well-deserved awards during the Conference. The Optometrist of the Year Award was presented to Dr. Natalie Sukontasup, for her tireless work on behalf of our profession. Dr. Katherine Funari received the Young OD of the Year Award, for expanding her duties on the Education Committee and for her new role as Membership Chair. Dr. Perry Lucente was given the Mel Waxman Award in recognition of his years of service as a seasoned advocate and for his continuous advice and contributions as MOA Third Party Chair. And last but not least, MOA recognized our Executive Director Jennifer Cohen with the V. Eugene McCrary Award.

Heading into fall, we are excited to bring you some local society meetings and the Annual Convention like you've never experienced at the Ashore Resort and Beach Club in Ocean City the weekend after Labor Day (Sept 6–8). Once again, our Convention will be offered in a hybrid format – allowing doctors to attend in person or virtually. We can't wait to share this quality education and the last rays of the summer with you!

Take advantage of a first time Special Member Benefit...FREE HEADSHOTS for In-Person Early Bird Registrants! **Act now** - <u>Register</u>, <u>Reserve Your Room</u> and <u>Reserve Your Headshot Appointment</u>! Seats, rooms and headshot appointments are extremely limited.







DON'T MISS OUT ON EARLY BIRD PRICING & MOA ROOM BLOCK RATE

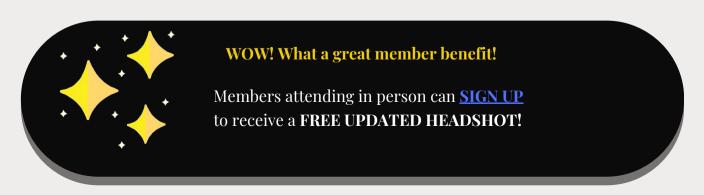
REGISTER TODAY!



RESERVE YOUR ROOM!

Visit the **MOA Conference Website** for speaker, course and schedule details.

The MOA 2024 Annual Convention will be presented in a half-day format to encourage family fun time! COPE Accreditation pending for 10 CE credits.



Education Excitement

As an Easton native, I'm very excited that this year's fall convention is in Ocean City! I'm also excited that we will be having Dr. James Fanelli as one of our main lectures. If you haven't seen any lectures from him you are definitely missing out. Dr. Fanelli is a graduate of Pennsylvania College of Optometry. After obtaining his Optometry Degree, Dr. Fanelli completed a residency in ocular disease at the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute. Dr. Fanelli's clinical work is particularly noted for his focus on glaucoma. His approach to glaucoma management is comprehensive, involving early detection, meticulous monitoring, and the latest therapeutic interventions.



Whitney Fahrman, O.D.
MOA Immediate
Past President

Dr. Fanelli's continuing education lectures are known for their practical applications. He shares real-world cases and experiences from his clinical practice, offering advice and strategies that you can implement immediately. This practical approach helps bridge the gap between theory and practice.

A lecture by Dr. James Fanelli is more than just an educational event; it is an opportunity to gain insights from a leading expert, enhance clinical skills, and be inspired by a visionary in optometry. So be sure to attend MOA's 2024 fall convention!



Lessons Learned

This May at our Summer Fun Conference, I was honored to be the recipient of the 2024 MOA V. Eugene McCrary Award. The award is presented to someone outside of the profession in recognition of significant contributions to the enhancement of eye care for the citizens of Maryland. As I look at the award placard prominently displayed in my office, I cannot help but reflect on the 13 year journey that brought me here today.



Jennifer Cohen MOA Executive Director

Prior to joining the MOA family in 2011, my professional background had been entirely focused around State politics. I had run a successful campaign, worked as Chief of Staff for a State Senator and had been a lobbyist before the Maryland General Assembly. With my young daughter in pre-school, I returned to the job force looking for a long-term career. Ironically, I found positions available with two organizations - MedChi and the Joseph E. Shaner Co. (an Association Management Company that ran MOA and several other local, State and nationwide non-profit organizations). Despite MedChi offering more money, I decided to go for the JES position, which would have me serving three State non-profit associations (Bankers, Chiropractors and Optometrists) as their Legislative Director. Working for these State associations for 2 years, I learned a few important lessons...

- Optometry is perhaps the #1 underdog among Maryland occupied health professions, and I love an underdog!
- No matter how dedicated and passionate an Association's leadership may be, it can only do so much to advance its legislative goals without active membership involvement and significant PAC funds.
- Historically, Maryland Optometry has been overshadowed and beaten down by its opponents with little voice in State politics.

In 2013, MOA and JES parted ways and I was offered the position of Executive Director, which I happily accepted. Immediately, I began a deep dive under the hood of MOA as I implemented new systems to ensure the Association could run as its own entity for the first time in over 25 years. In getting to know Association leadership and its engaged members, I came to understand just how far behind Maryland Optometry had fallen and just how far it had to go to simply have the practice rights that arguably 48 other states enjoyed. This understanding left me frustrated and wanting, wondering if Maryland Optometrists felt the same. I made a promise to myself (and to the MOA) that I would devote my political expertise and all my energy to leveling the field for Maryland Optometry.

Two years later (2015–16) with a successful MOA administration in place, I focused on bolstering MOA PAC funds and developing relationships with key legislators in the House and Senate committees responsible for scope expansion. Despite my best efforts, I found progress slow on both fronts. Florida Optometry (FOA), which had just passed scope expansion legislation to allow for most orals, had raised over \$250K in PAC funds. By contrast, I was struggling to keep MOA PAC funds at a mere \$50K. The same was true for grassroots advocacy in Maryland. which I was finding increasingly difficult to necessarily grow. Getting members involved in our Key OD Network to match doctors with key legislators who control the fate of the profession's advancement was proving far more difficult than I imagined.

Lessons Learned

continued

I wanted to proclaim a personal victory on both fronts (PAC funds and grassroots advocacy), but alas I could not. Instead, fate (or Lady Luck perhaps) intervened in the form of the 2018 elections, clearing the political landscape of the formerly insurmountable obstacles to our legislative success. Recognizing the importance of this moment in time MOA pounced, successfully passing scope legislation that brought Maryland Optometry into the 21st century – albeit still at the bottom 10% nationwide with respect to practice privileges. Regardless of how it happened, both Maryland Optometry and Maryland Ophthalmology rejoiced — the former enjoying the notion of new, long overdue privileges and the latter proud that relatively speaking, only little was given up, keeping Maryland among the most restrictive states to practice.



After the very short victory lap of 2019, COVID struck and Optometry like most health care professions did its best to adapt to an ever increasing virtual world. New and unique threats and opportunities presented themselves, and once again, advocacy was needed to protect and advance the profession. MOA fought to ensure that ODs were recognized as essential providers, their services invaluable to Maryland citizenry.

Now let's fast forward to present day. I had the pleasure of attending this year's AOA Optometry's Meeting conference in Nashville with three young and hungry MOA members of leadership. As we collectively listened and learned about the successes of other state affiliates who have improved their insurance and scope laws, we decided that IMMEDIATE ACTION IS NEEDED TO KEEP MARYLAND OPTOMETRY RELEVANT.

We have appointed a fantastic new Legislative Chair <u>Dr. Corinne Casey</u>, <u>OD</u>, <u>FAAO</u> and have reinvigorated enthusiasm among leadership to move our political goals forward, but WE NEED MORE! WE NEED to raise PAC \$s. WE NEED doctors to agree to be Key ODs to meet with their legislators once or twice a year to keep and develop important relationships in the General Assembly. WE NEED an active and engaged membership.

The lessons I learned years ago when I first came aboard with the MOA still hold true. Are we going to let our best and brightest migrate to neighboring states with better scope laws? Will you be forced to sell your practice (if you can) for hundreds of thousands less because of Maryland's abysmal scope of practice? Change can happen, but not without your help. Please do your part and take action today! Make a Recurring
Donation to the MOA PAC and Sign Up to be a Key OD – get to know the legislators who represent you in the Maryland General Assembly and educate them about what Maryland Optometry does for your community.

In closing, I feel very lucky to do what I love among people who I respect, appreciate and admire. I thank you for recognizing my 13 years of service to this Association, but know that my job is not yet done. With your help, we can elevate Maryland Optometry to the position it deserves and help Maryland citizens access needed eye health care.

I thank you for the opportunity to serve this community. It continues to be a joy and my humble honor.

A Word from the New MOA Legislative Comm Chair

One lesson learned from Optometry's Meeting in Nashville is that optometrists in every state depend on their local leadership and communal advocacy efforts to shape their professional career trajectories. Continuous advancements in diagnostic technology and therapeutic interventions will improve our ability to care for the growing population, but only if we are permitted to integrate new skills and techniques as the standard of eye care delivery evolves. In addition to

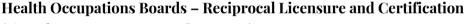


<u>Corinne Casey, O.D., FAAO</u> MOA Legislative Comm Chair

advocating for opportunities to enhance our knowledge base and skillset, the MOA is perpetually guarding against vision plan abuses, medical plan restrictions, contact lens verification loopholes, and criticism of our qualifications. The privileges and modes of practice that optometrists in Maryland enjoy today reflect the dedicated efforts by our previous MOA leaders and active members. To continue providing excellent care to our patients, we need both new and experienced optometrists to engage in future MOA efforts by donating their time, expertise, or money required to protect our profession's growth. Reach out today to discuss ways to support the MOA and better serve the greater Maryland community.

Legislative Update

NEW 2024 MARYLAND OPTOMETRY RELATED LAWS



(Signed Into Law By Gov - Chapter 32)

Authorizing certain health occupations boards to adopt regulations establishing reciprocity for individuals licensed or certified in another state

State Board of Examiners in Optometry - Criminal History Records Checks

(Signed Into Law By Gov - Chapter 814)

Requiring an applicant for a license to practice optometry and certain applicants for the renewal of a license to submit to a criminal history records check obtained from the Criminal Justice Information Central Repository of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; and providing that information obtained from the Central Repository is confidential, may not be redisseminated, and is to be used only for licensing purposes. Anticipated fee of approximately \$50-\$55







New MOA Member Welcome



Christine Luzuriaga, O.D.

Brian Gonzales, O.D.

Lynette Wray, O.D.

Rossana Luna, O.D.

Alexa Pereira, O.D.

Mangian Tu, O.D.

Gregory Katchuk, O.D.

Mesheca Bunyon, O.D.

Dominic Brown, O.D.

Adam Davis, O.D.

Paul Hsiao, O.D.

Ellilta Mezgebu, O.D.

Minh-Khanh Nguyen, O.D.

Jordan Oliver, O.D.

David Rosner, O.D.

Namra Tanveer, O.D.

Ying Narine, O.D.

Katelynn Bauer, O.D.

Bethel Yoseph, O.D.

Payal Kothari, O.D.

Tasneem Maner, O.D.

Syed Hussain, O.D.

Kimberly Williams Bolar, O.D.



Welcome new 2024 MOA members! Whether you seek info about general license laws, society networking/events, mentorship, advocacy or simply CE credits, MOA has you covered. Please visit our website to learn about the many member benefits we offer and never hesitate to reach out to MOA staff anytime via email or by phone/text at (410) 486-9662.

We are here to support you!

— Local Events



Dr. Judy Hu invites you to the
Young OD Annual Topgolf Event

Event is FREE! Space is limited.

REGISTER TODAY!

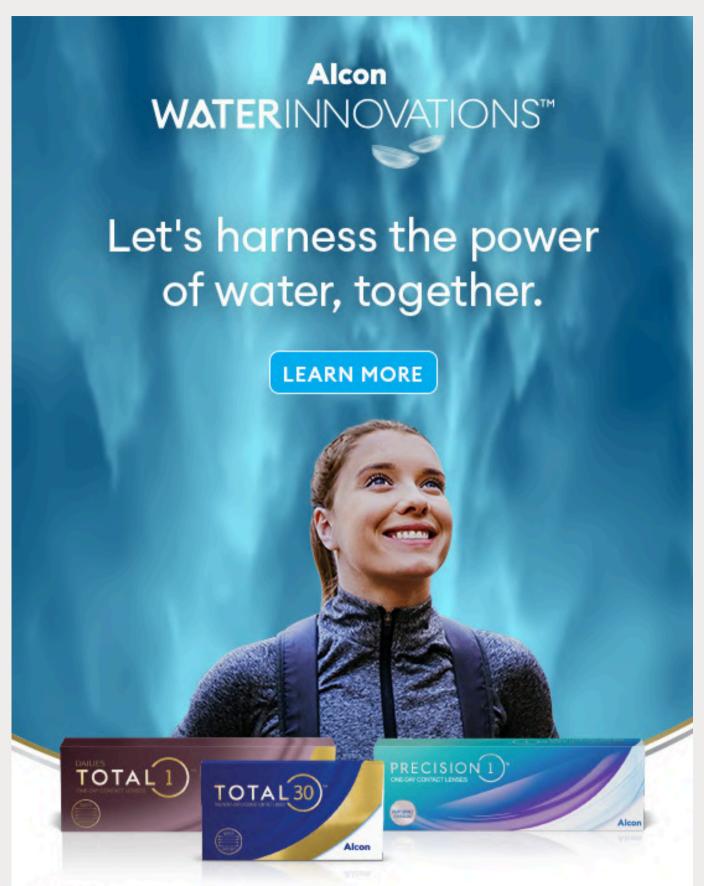
Dr. Laura Goldberg invites you to the

AACOS Summer Cruise CE Event!

Space is limited.

REGISTER today!







See product instructions for complete wear, care, and safety information.

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Congratulations to the MOA 2024 Award Recipients!

Thank you for your dedication to the profession of Maryland Optometry



Optometrist of the Year Award Natalie Sukontasup. O.D.



Young Optometrist of the Year Award Katharine Funari, O.D., M.P.H., F.A.A.O.



Melvin Waxman Award Perry Lucente, O.D.



V. Eugene McCrary Award

Jennifer Cohen,

MOA Executive Director

Congratulations to all MOA 2024 Award Winners!

— Member Paraoptometric Resources

With Americans' increasing demand for primary eye health and vision care services provided by doctors of optometry, paraoptometric staff play a vital role in the efficient and effective delivery of quality patient care. That's why the AOA is focused on equipping paraoptometric professionals with the education and resources necessary to build skillsets that can help optometrists meet this demand for care.

Enrolling your staff couldn't be easier, and it's FREE! **ENROLL TODAY**

AOA associate membership gains staff acces to:

- ✓ CPC- and AOA-approved <u>CE and professional development</u>, training and certification materials in <u>AOA</u> <u>EyeLearn</u>.
- ✓ Member rates for AOA events, such as Optometry's Meeting.
- ✓ Volunteer and networking opportunities on a national level.
- ✓ All CPC, AOA publications and <u>newsletters</u>.

Have questions about enrolling paraoptometric staff or associate member benefits? Contact the <u>AOA Education</u> <u>Center</u> or Member Services to get started today.

Member Services

Phone: 800.365.2219



Third Party Tidbits

National Health & Vision Plan Advocacy

The AOA, affiliates and doctors of optometry across the country are standing up for reimbursement and coverage fairness, supporting optometric practice success and doctors' ability to deliver quality patient care.

We are fighting for reimbursement and coverage fairness through:

- **Direct advocacy** against the vision plan industry's lobbying group, the National Association of Vision Care Plans.
- **Direct action** to resolve doctor complaints with health and vision plans.
- **Direct dialogue** with plan CEOs.
- Advancing state advocacy through legislative and regulatory efforts.
- Advancing federal advocacy through bipartisan legislation, congressional intervention and regulatory efforts.
- **Building alliances** with doctor and patient organizations.
- Formulating legal strategies and next steps in consultation with anti-trust experts.

If you experience challenges with a health or vision plan, please report this to **stopplanabuses@aoa.org**.

Click on the graphic below and bookmark the link to learn about other vision plan abuses being addressed at the federal and state level by the AOA Third Party Committee.





