

March 8, 1984

LB 561

that they already have. So of the two, they already have the one that has the potential for the most danger. I guess also the last thing I'd say is I'm sure that in 1979 you heard a lot of horror stories about people would be mistreated, go blind, et cetera, et cetera, and the question you probably have to ask yourself just before you vote on the bill is, have those horror stories, in fact, come true? Have you heard of any problems with them? I think that you know that optometrists have to have malpractice insurance just like other health providers. With that I would close, Mr. President.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Senator Shirley Mac Marsh.

SENATOR MARSH: Thank you, Senator Nichol and members of the Legislature, and he is correct. That is my middle name. I am opposed to LB 561. I think it is an unnecessary and could be a very dangerous extension of the powers conferred upon optometrists. One of the arguments which supporters of LB 561 have used is that they have been cooperating with the Public Health Committee in considering the bill and that the medical association has not. I take this to mean that the medical association opposes the bill. I know from personal experience that our state's physicians are willing to work with limited health care practitioners where it is shown there is a need and that the medical care can be delivered safely. We received excellent help and cooperation from the medical community in working with the nurse-midwife bill. I know the medical association also worked closely with the nurse-practitioners in ironing out the details of their bill. There is a fundamental difference between LB 561 and the other two bills. Neither the nurse-midwives or the nurse-practitioners want to practice medicine independently. Those two groups will be working under the supervision of the patient's physician who will have ultimate authority for the treatment. In contrast, the optometrists want us to give them the authority to practice medicine independently of any physician. I would expect the medical community to oppose this change. In the past, and I emphasize this, in the past we have counted on the Board of Medicine and Surgery to regulate and supervise medical practice. I will not vote for LB 561.

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