July 8, 2013

H.E Dilma Vana Rousseff
President of the Republic of Brazil

Your Excellency,

I am writing as President of the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO), the academic leadership organization representing all accredited schools and colleges of optometry in the fifty states of the United States and Puerto Rico. The twenty-one ASCO member institutions train our nation’s optometrists.

The Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry is aware that the Brazilian Congress has just approved Medical Bill No. 268/2002, which seeks to regulate the medical profession. We understand that this bill could significantly limit or forbid the professional practice of several non-medical health care professions, including optometry, bringing these disciplines under the direct control of medical doctors. Doctors of Optometry in the United States are autonomous, independent providers of eye and vision care, which we believe is a model applicable worldwide.

ASCO supports the view of the World Council of Optometry (WCO) that implementing this bill will significantly reduce access to immediate and affordable eye health care in Brazil. We believe that this can only increase the incidence of failure to identify sight-threatening eye problems in the early stages of development and failure to prevent visual impairment and blindness.

Your Excellency, given your recent commitment to improve health care in Brazil, we respectfully request that you not put this Bill into law especially Item ix of Article 4 of the Bill.

Thank you in advance for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Smythe, O.D., M.S.
President
Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry

cc: Gilberto Carvalho

Gleisi Helena Hoffmann
Ministra-chefe da Casa Civil da Presidência da República