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"They are being used to protect the agency (DHS) and not the child," Dr. Sternke said.

Also appearing before the committee was Debbie Richardson, executive director of the Oklahoma Committee to Prevent Child Abuse.

Richardson said the problem of child abuse in Oklahoma and other parts of the country had become "a public health crisis," and that efforts to deal with the problem focused on abuse after the fact, rather than through prevention.

The focus of her group, Richardson said, was to break the cycle of abuse, by targeting families, particularly at-risk families, with prevention efforts. Those efforts, Richardson said, would take a period of years to be successful.

HOUSE MEMBERS DEBATE SB995, OUTLOOK FAVORABLE FOR OPTOMETRISTS

By Marta McCloskey
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Rep. Dwayne Steidley, R-Claremore, told fellow members and spectators that SB995 was the anticipated measure they had all been waiting to hear. The bill would restrict the power of certain boards to ask for a declaratory ruling against other boards, except those professions the board governs. Steidley invited questions from members immediately. "What's puzzled me about the bill, is how fast it has come through the legislative process," said Rep. Fred Perry, R-Tulsa.

"I have been trying to get several bills out of my hair, what little hair I have left," Steidley quipped.

Rep. Loyd Benson, D-Frederick, explained to members that the House had already addressed over 400 bills and only had 95 left. "This measure was taken during Interim," Rep. Jim Glover, D-Elgin, assured members.

"It sounds like you have been taking lessons from *The Daily Oklahoman* reporters," Steidley charged Perry. "The issue has been around for quite some time." Prior to 1994, he explained, there was no process for the State Medical Board to sue other boards.

In 1994, the Legislature endorsed a measure that allowed the State Medical Licensure Board to sue other boards for a declaratory ruling. Steidley said he was misled by the legislation. "At first, when I questioned the intent of the State Medical Licensure Board, they assured me the legislation would not be used for that purpose. However, later they inserted the language enabling them to sue," he said.

Rep. Don McCorkell, D-Tulsa, asked Steidley if he believed the measure would remove the ability of the State Medical Licensure Board to license individuals practicing surgical procedures. "The bill says boards should not be getting into other boards business," Steidley responded. "If the State Medical Board wants to bring a bill here to govern the healing arts boards, then we can cross that bridge...this has nothing to do with an individual's capability."

"The State Medical Board still has the right to bring an injunction against anyone practicing outside the scope of their capabilities," Steidley remarked. "Under Title 12, they still have the right to ask for a declaratory judgment."

Rep. Russ Roach, D-Tulsa, questioned Steidley on the intent of the bill. "Isn't this bill first and foremost about laser surgery," Roach asked Steidley.

"This has nothing to do with that," Steidley asserted.

"Well today, you (Steidley) passed out information addressing the use of lasers and it is sitting on all of our desks," Roach claimed.

"That is only meant as information to present both sides and show financial inequities," Steidley told Roach. "These healing boards do not have resources like the State Medical Licensure Board." Steidley said it was a separate issue for the State Medical Board to become a "super board" over all healing arts professions. "As I said before, that is an issue that the Legislature can discuss later."

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