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Yang Amat Berhormat Dato' Seri Mohamed Azmin bin Ali,  
Minister of International Trade and Industry,  
7, Jalan Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah, Kompleks Kerajaan,  
50480 Kuala Lumpur, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur.

Y.B. Dato' Seri Minister,

**PROFESIONAL RESPONSE & COLLECTIVE VIEW OF ASSOCIATION OF MALAYSIAN OPTOMETRISTS (AMO) ON SELECTED INDUSTRIES/BUSINESSES PERMITTED TO OPERATE DURING PHASE 3 OF MOVEMENT CONTROL ORDER (MCO)**

The Association of Malaysian Optometrists (AMO) regrets to hear the government had withdrawn the permission for Optometrists to operate their normal services during the next phase of the Movement Control Order (MCO). This decision by the government was made without consultation & engagement with the stakeholders including AMO as the biggest professional body representing Optometrists in Malaysia.

AMO would like to clarify the nature of our services to the *rakyat* i.e. Optometry services is all about the provision of vision & eye health care instead of pure spectacle or contact lens sales as thought by many. A check for spectacle power, is actually an examination of ocular & visual health, which culminates in a health status advise and a pair of spectacles of any other visual aids, if required. **Optical Act 1991 is the law that Optometrists abide to, and all practicing optometrists are registered with the Malaysian Optical Council (MOC) which comes under the purview of the Ministry of Health**, in fulfillment of the requirement of the said Act.

Notwithstanding, there are also groups of optical shops/premises that are purely selling spectacles as their main business activity because the Optical Act 1991 was very rudimentary when it was gazette back in 1992. There are two groups being catered for in the Act, i.e. the Optometrists and the Opticians.

Be rest assured that University-qualified registered Optometrists are delivering visual & ocular healthcare to the *rakyat*. **Optometrists are primary health care practitioners trained to examine the eyes to detect defects in vision, signs of injury and screen for ocular diseases.** In fact, World Council of Optometry, an agency under World Health Organization (WHO) defined Optometrist as a healthcare profession that is autonomous, educated, and regulated (licensed/registered) which means capable in making independent decision and is competent to exercise judgement on what constitutes emergency and essential services.

As such, we Optometrists, humbly request to be appropriately classified under “**Healthcare Providers**” in the same way as Medical Doctors, Dental Surgeons, and Pharmacists are, within the provision of the MCO, hence allowing the Optometrist practices to operate under the guidelines provided by National



Security Council (NSC), Ministry of International Trades & Industries (MITI) and Ministry of Health (MOH). All registered practicing optometrists will abide strictly with any standard SOPs that are religiously followed by the other healthcare providers in the discharge of their duty. AMO has also taken the liberty to publish a stringent **Guidelines for Optometric Practices During Covid-19 Pandemic**. This guideline can be downloaded by all Optometrists from our website at <https://www.amoptom.org/covid-19-response/>.

AMO would also like to reiterate that **good eyesight is a prerequisite for most learning & working activities**. During MCO, everyone needs a good eyesight. Front liners such as doctors need sharp vision to operate & treat patients. Delivery drivers need crystal clear vision to ensure their safety while driving. Meanwhile, students and office workers that study and work from home will definitely need good vision to perform their daily tasks while maintaining productivity. Not all people have a good eyesight. Approximately **25% of Malaysian are depended on their visual aids e.g. spectacles and contact lenses to function normally in everyday life**. Three out of 100 people in Malaysia suffer high myopia, which means without proper correction, **they can be categorized as legally blind**.

Optometrists can help in all the above situations. Broken glasses can be fixed, proper prescription can be dispensed and any issues with regards to vision problems can be handled by a well-prepared Optometrist. Again, **AMO stressed that Optometrists are competent to determine which cases can be considered emergencies & essentials**. Not all cases will be taken as those cases that can be postponed or referred will be postponed and referred.

Thus, the correct and clear classification for Optometrist as “**Healthcare Providers under the purview of Ministry of Health**” would enable us to obtain the respective approval and permission to operate from our respective district councils, without any qualms regarding the need to operate within this very difficult circumstance of COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for your consideration, and I wish the government all the best in their effort to contain this deadly contagion.

Yours sincerely,



Woon Pak Seong  
President,  
The Association of Malaysian Optometrists (AMO).

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