



February 26, 2018

Dear General Assembly:

As the Executive Director of MedMates, Rhode Island's life sciences and medical technology industry group, we support innovations and new technologies that make it easier and more affordable for all Rhode Islanders to access care when it's convenient for them. We believe that fostering an environment that embraces innovation will be key to growing Rhode Island's economy and to improving health care outcomes for our state's residents.

That is why we oppose any effort in the General Assembly to ban new ocular telehealth services. Such a ban would only deny Rhode Island residents access to an innovative and safe new way to deliver vision care.

Our elected leaders in Rhode Island should be promoting innovation that helps people more easily and conveniently obtain care, increases competition, and lowers costs. In the realm of eye care, Congress and the Federal Trade Commission have made it clear that once you get a prescription from an ophthalmologist or optometrist, that prescription is yours to be filled there in the office, at another location, or online. This has made things easier for patients and driven down the costs of contact lenses.

Right now, Rhode Island vision care patients have the choice to access app-based ocular telehealth services that allow for an online refraction and eye test from home for renewing their prescription. These tests are reviewed by a Rhode Island licensed ophthalmologist, a medical doctor who decides whether to issue a prescription renewal. The ophthalmologist makes the decision about the renewal and the patient makes the decision about where to buy the contacts.

These new services are an excellent example of the type of medical technology we should be embracing to increase access to health care.

We therefore urge you to oppose any legislation that would ban innovative new ocular telehealth services.

Sincerely,

Carol Malysz
Executive Director