

March 21, 2018

Senate President Dominick J. Ruggiero
State House, Room 316
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903



RE: Support Innovative Ocular Telehealth Services

Dear Senate President Ruggiero,

The Rhode Island Coalition of Entrepreneurs supports innovations and new technologies in the telemedicine space that make it easier and more affordable for Rhode Islanders to get care when it's convenient for them. That's why we write to share concerns regarding Senate Bill 2404, which would ban ocular telehealth services in Rhode Island. This legislation, if passed, may limit opportunities for innovation in the telehealth space.

We should be promoting innovation that helps people more conveniently obtain care, increases competition, and lowers costs. In the realm of eye care, Congress and the FTC 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.

In Rhode Island we have the opportunity to build on telemedicine tools to create a new industry and boost our local economy. Right now Rhode Island consumers can use vision 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 who decides whether to issue a prescription renewal, and are not being used for eye health exams or initial contact fittings – only ophthalmologist-driven contact lens renewals. The ophthalmologist makes the decision about the renewal and the patient makes the decision about where to buy the contacts.

Rhode Island's entrepreneurial community supports fostering an atmosphere that is welcoming to safe new vision telehealth services, and future innovations in telemedicine. We ask that you keep this spirit of entrepreneurship and innovation in mind as you consider the implications of Senate Bill 2404.

Sincerely,

Pat Sabatino

Pat Sabatino
Chairman