



January 31, 2019

Lieutenant Governor and Senate President Cyrus Habib,  
President Pro Tempore Karen Keiser, Senate Majority Leader Andy Billig and  
Republican Leader Mark Schoesler:

**Re: SB 5759 (Cleveland)**

Dear President Habib and Distinguished Members of the Washington State  
Senate:

On behalf of the National Association of Optometrists and Opticians (NAOO), a national organization representing the retail optical industry and its thousands of employed and affiliated optometrists and opticians, I'd like to go on record as opposing **SB 5759** relating to the use of remote technology in prescribing prescription eye wear and ask you to oppose the bill as unnecessary for consumer protection.

The NAOO is consumer-service oriented, dedicated to the proposition that the consumer's visual care needs are met most completely and economically by the free market, in the tradition of the American business system. NAOO members collectively represent nearly 9000 co-located eye care offices and optical dispensaries serving millions of patients and eyewear customers each year. Our members have over 180 offices in Washington.

The proposed legislation attempts to stifle the development and use of new technology in the provision of eye care. It puts unnecessary limits on the use of remote technology and will tie the hands of practitioners as such technology further develops in the future. A better alternative to rigid restrictions such as these is to allow qualified licensees to determine whether to use telehealth and to what degree when ocular care is sought by a patient. We note that both the medical and optometry boards have approached the use of this technology in this way by adopting Guidelines for their use. Such Guidelines provide a more flexible approach to this issue, making the proposed legislation unnecessary.

More specifically, the Telehealth Guidelines adopted by optometry, and which anticipate the use of remote technology, were based on those in place for medicine and were carefully reviewed and adapted for optometry. Both medicine and optometry, therefore, have useful standards that create opportunity for the use of modern technology, provide easier adaptability as the technology develops and

provide the protections needed for consumers.

As the Federal Trade Commission has commented on earlier legislation, telehealth can potentially increase the supply of accessible practitioners and thereby enhance price and non-price competition, reduce transportation expenditures and improve access to quality care. Generally, competition in health care markets benefits consumers by containing health care prices, expanding access and choice, and promoting innovation, but this bill would have the opposite effect. We urge its defeat.

In summary, we encourage you and the Senate to rely on the judgment of the vision care professional in deciding whether to use telehealth and the appropriate type of examination and level of care to be provided, all as provided in established guidelines already in place. Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I may be reached at the address above or at [joebneville@gmail.com](mailto:joebneville@gmail.com).

Very truly yours,

*Joseph B. Neville*

Joseph B. Neville

Executive Director

National Association of Optometrists and Opticians, Inc.

cc: Board of Directors