



December 20, 2019

Assemblymember Randy Voepel
State Capitol, Room 4009
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Assemblymember Voepel,

Americans for Vision Care Innovation is a bipartisan coalition of consumer and taxpayer groups, think tanks, and vision care companies who compete against each other in the contact lens marketplace. We work across the country on the state and national level to protect the rights of the 46 million Americans who wear contact lenses. Our mission is to promote policies which encourage choice, competition, and lower costs for consumers when it comes to vision care. We write today in opposition to AB 156, which would ban ocular telemedicine and online vision checks.

It seems clear that AB 156 would reduce access to vision care by preventing most consumers from getting their prescriptions renewed online and from having the ability to get online vision checks. Close to six million Californians wear contact lenses and their access to vision care, their right to use new innovative technologies that would save them time and money and give them more choices when it comes to buying contact lenses would be severely threatened if AB 156 should become law. At the same time, taxpayers who cover the insurance benefits of state employees would be denied cost savings, as well as other efficiency benefits to government programs that telemedicine can provide.

AB 156 will severely reduce access to vision care in California. It will especially impact people who live in communities with little or no vision care providers, families who live in rural districts who don't have access to care. It also hurts working families who work swing shifts or multiple jobs and can't get to an eye doctor's office during "normal" business hours. Online vision checks give consumers and taxpayers the option to do their vision checks at a time that is convenient to them and in the privacy of their own home and the comfort of knowing their checks are reviewed by a licensed ophthalmologist. These online services also tend to be much less expensive than what consumers are charged in the optometrist's office.

Online prescription renewal tests have been offered across the country and here in California for close to four years. Millions of online prescription renewal tests have been performed across the country using online platforms and at this time we are unaware of a single adverse event, medical malpractice claim, or consumer initiated medical board complaint as a result of using these services.

California's contact lens users and glasses wearers are entitled to the greatest possible degree of choice and convenience in the way they renew their lens prescriptions – and at the lowest possible prices. AB 156 would prohibit consumers from getting an online prescription renewal for glasses or contacts in California. We urge you to instead work with us to increase vision care access and choice across California.

We are happy to speak with you and your staff in more detail at any time to more fully outline our concerns with this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Americans for Vision Care Innovation

cc: Assembly Business and Professions Committee Member Chair Evan Low
Members of the Assembly Business and Professions Committee
Che Salinas, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom

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