



March 1, 2021

Chair Sharon Cooper
Vice Chair Dr. Mark Newton
Members of the Health & Human Services Committee

Georgia House of Representatives
18 Capitol Square SW
Atlanta GA, 30334

Dear Chair Cooper, Vice Chair Newton and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

[Americans for Vision Care Innovation](#), which is a bipartisan coalition of taxpayer advocates, consumer groups, think tanks and innovative companies working to ensure Americans across the country have access to the latest cost and time-saving eye care technologies, writes today in strong support of HB 629. Dr. Newton's bill is a critically important piece of legislation that will allow Georgians to get their contact lens prescriptions renewed via telemedicine. This change will lower costs and increase access to vitally needed vision care services for consumers and taxpayers, while ensuring that the services are held to the same standard of care as in-person.

More than 40 million Americans wear contact lenses and millions more wear glasses. Georgia contact lens and glasses consumers deserve the right to lower costs, more convenience and easier access to vision care solutions. Dr. Newton's bill is simple but incredibly important for Georgians; it allows for eye examinations to occur using telemedicine platforms regardless of where the patient is located, a standard that nearly every other state in the union allows.

Right now in Georgia, patients can only use telemedicine platforms if they are sitting in their doctor's office. This current restriction in Georgia law defeats the purpose of telemedicine by requiring a patient to travel to a doctor's office for their exam. As we learned during the pandemic, telemedicine platforms are critically important to ensure patients can access care and services. HB 629 will ensure this access to ocular telemedicine, reducing vision care costs for consumers. Taxpayers, who help to fund state employee health insurance systems, will save money too, and will experience long-term benefits by the forward-thinking example that ocular telemedicine sets for other state health care programs.

Those who are opposed to increasing choice and access when it comes to vision care will try to make unfounded claims about telemedicine in order to stop this bill. As the Committee considers this bill, we want to ensure legislators have accurate information about the use of telemedicine for vision care and online prescription renewal services. Here are the key facts you should know:

- Consumers must have a prescription from an eye doctor in order to use telemedicine services initially. **These online technologies are designed to help get prescriptions renewed, not to replace comprehensive eye exams.** For millions of Americans, their prescription changes very little between the ages of 18-50, and the American Academy of Ophthalmologists, the world's largest association of eye physicians and surgeons, recommends that healthy adults under the age of 40 receive an in-person eye exam every 5 to 10 years; among older patients, the recommended interval is 4 years or less. This means that for many of your constituents, there is no need to return to a provider's office on an annual basis simply to renew a contact lens prescription.
- **These new services are easy to use and are available 24 hours a day.** Your constituents no longer have to rush across town, drive for miles to the nearest city or take off work to get a prescription renewed – or worse, travel for hours if they live in a community with no eye doctors. This is especially important during public health emergencies when offices may be closed. These services are also generally far less expensive for consumers than visiting an eye care provider in person.
- Customers who use these services go through eye health screenings as part of the process and their online prescription **renewals are reviewed and approved by board-certified ophthalmologists and optometrists**, who are specifically licensed to practice in the state where the exam occurs.
- **Online prescription renewal tests have been offered for more than four years in this country.** During this time, more than one million online prescription renewal tests have been performed using online platforms and we are unaware of a single adverse event, medical malpractice claim or consumer-initiated medical board complaint as a result of using these services.
- **The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) recently weighed in with concerns about legislation in several states that attempted to ban ocular telemedicine**, saying that banning telemedicine limits a consumer's ability to access eye care services and could raise the cost of eyeglasses and contact lenses.

The facts are clear. Georgians need access to telemedicine and online vision care, now more than ever. We urge you to pass HB 629 and remove Georgia's ban on this innovative and cost-saving technology. We can't afford to delay these much-needed technologies any longer.

If you have questions about online prescription renewal or the information we present in this letter, please contact us.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

