



Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Dennis R. Schrader, Acting Secretary

Maryland Board of Examiners in Optometry
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February 16, 2021

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky
Chair, Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SB 568 – Health Care Practitioners – Telehealth – Out-of-State Health Care Practitioners – Letter of Concern

Dear Chair Pinsky:

The Maryland Board of Examiners in Optometry (the “Board”) is submitting this Letter of Concern for SB 568 - Health Care Practitioners – Telehealth – Out-of-State Health Care Practitioners. The Board supports the underlying purpose of SB 568 - to increase access to care, particularly telehealth services, for patients in Maryland.

However, in the sole interest of public safety and protection, the Board wants to ensure that any licensed practitioner, whether within or out-of-state is not allowed to prescribe or dispense eye glasses or lenses via telehealth to any patient in this State. Additionally, the Board stands firmly in its position that a complete ocular exam cannot be performed virtually by any individual, which includes technicians working in retail and online vision services companies.

Telehealth, which includes the related concept of telemedicine, is a rapidly-evolving tool for the delivery of health information and services. The Board supports the appropriate use of eye and vision telehealth services to supplement access to high-value, high-quality eye and vision care because when used appropriately, can serve to improve patient coordination and communication among and between doctors of optometry and ophthalmologists, as well as other primary care or specialty care providers.

Though we may have differences between eye and vision services delivered via telehealth and the diagnosis and health care delivered in-person by an eye doctor, any differences must *take into account Standard of care to promote the health of the citizens of Maryland. This means that Standard of care must remain the same regardless of whether eye and vision services are provided in-person, remotely via telehealth, or through any combination thereof.* Eye and

vision telehealth services cannot, based on current technologies and uses, replace an in-person comprehensive eye examination provided by an eye doctor to issue a refractive prescription either for eyeglasses and /or contact lenses.

Thank you for your consideration of the Board's concerns and if you have any additional questions, please contact the Board's Executive Director, Patricia G. Bennett at 443-934-0816 or patricia.bennett@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

Patricia G. Bennett

Patricia G. Bennett, MSW
Board Executive Director

The opinion of the Board expressed in this document does not necessarily reflect that of the Department of Health or the Administration.