



Fellow Opticians,

Recent substantial changes in vision insurance and vision care plans have resulted in their increasing intervention in the proper processing and filling of written prescriptions by pushing certain lens products by requiring us to use specified labs to source lenses, etc. Most of these changes have had a negative effect upon our profession and our ability to properly fill prescriptions by providing patients with the best possible corrective lenses, contact lenses, and frames in a timely and cost effective manner.

Last year a Bill was placed into the Virginia General Assembly to start a dialogue and craft legislation which would benefit patients. This Bill was held over in hopes of creating compromise legislation this year that would include Ophthalmologists, Optometrists, and Opticians. However, the Virginia Optometric Association has lobbied for the introduction of a bill which excludes Opticians. The exclusion of Opticians in this bill is both protectionist and anti consumer. It diminishes our profession and our licensure which recognizes us as health care providers. It also limits beneficial competition within Virginia's optical professions. Unchecked, this type of legislative action could eventually lead to the obsolescence and elimination of our profession in the state, which would significantly reduce patient choice in corrective lenses and eyewear. Therefore it is absolutely necessary for all of us to contact our state representatives in the General Assembly, demanding that Opticians be included along with Optometrists and Ophthalmologists in House Bill 1444.

We absolutely need all of our fellow Opticians and patients to contact legislators to make sure House Bill 1444 passes and includes Opticians. This contact needs to include emails, individual letters, and phone calls (NO FORM LETTERS OR FORM EMAILS). All of these actions take little time and effort, but will protect our patients right to obtain affordable high quality frames and lenses offered by Virginia Licensed Opticians no matter which professional setting you serve them in.

Here are a few points to make when asking your legislators to support a modified version of House Bill 1444 **which includes Opticians**:

Currently, many vision plans force eyecare providers to use certain laboratories which are often owned by a manufacturers of a specific brand of corrective lenses. These lenses may not always be the best choice to fill prescriptions technologically or otherwise. The passage of House Bill 1444 will allow all eyecare providers to source corrective lenses and associated materials to fill prescriptions from any lab , providing the best vision to the patient at the lowest cost in the shortest amount of time.

Increased competition amongst lens manufacturers and labs will provide the public with a wide array of choices with lower copayments and overall costs in a shorter period of time.

The increased competition will support greater employment within Virginia as independent laboratories and suppliers can continue to prosper rather than be crushed by unfair industry practices. Many labs have closed in our state in recent years. Consequently, lenses and frames are now sourced not only out of state but outside of the United States.

House Bill 1444 must include Opticians as they are licensed by the State of Virginia and are duly recognized vision care providers by both the State and Federal Government. Not including Opticians in this Bill diminishes and excludes one profession to the financial benefit of another further reducing the freedom of choice and competition which benefit Virginia's vision care consumers. Here is a sample letter for you to use as a guide:

*Dear Delegate (or Chairman if head of a committee)*

*I am asking you to support the inclusion of Opticians in House bill 1444. The passage of this bill places the vision care of patients back in the hands of providers by allowing them freedom of choice in how to best serve their patients. However, any legislation must treat all vision care providers equally. Not including Virginia's Licensed Opticians in this Bill diminishes and excludes one profession to the financial benefit of another, reducing competition and freedom of choice to consumers. House Bill 1444 is pro consumer and pro competition, but only if it includes Virginia's Opticians along with Optometrists and Ophthalmologists. Please support its passage with the inclusion of Opticians. (Please write everything in your own words. You may however send the same email to all Delegates.)*

Remember that all residents of Virginia benefit from the passage of this Bill when it includes Opticians. Friends, family members, neighbors, and patients should all be asked to contact legislators. An email coupled with a phone call is best. This action cannot be successful without phone calls and LOTS of them. You need to contact the Bill sponsor Delegate Lee Ware first and then to your local Delegate as well as the Chairman and members of the House Commerce and Labor Committee to which the Bill has been assigned.

Don't wait either. Time is of the essence. Do this now! Construct your email and send it to all of the Delegates. It takes so little effort, especially compared to all of the time and effort it has taken to gain your license.

Thank you,

*Kristi Green, President & Tom Cox, VA Optician*