

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 116  
BEFORE THE HOUSE WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF OPTOMETRISTS AND OPTICIANS

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chairman Scherer, Ranking Member Rogers and members of the House Ways & Means Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present as a proponent of House Bill 116. My name is Joe Neville and I am the Executive Director of the National Association of Optometrists and Opticians, or NAOO. We would also like to offer thanks to Representative Merrin for introducing this important measure.

The NAOO is a national trade organization representing the retail optical field. 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. Our membership in Ohio consists of Luxottica Retail of North America (d.b.a. LensCrafters, Pearle Vision, Sears Optical and Target Optical), Costco Optical, EyeMart Express, HVHC Retail Group (d.b.a. Visionworks), **National Vision Inc. (d.b.a. America's Best, Eyeglass World and one military PX base at Wright Patterson Air Force base), U.S. Vision, Inc. (d.b.a. J.C. Penney Optical, BJ's Optical and Meijer's Optical Centers) and Walmart Optical. Each of these companies have made significant investments in the "Buckeye State" by building and merchandising their stores while employing hundreds of Ohio citizens in a variety of store and management positions.**

House Bill 116 is important because eye care and the affordability of any resulting eye wear are important to the health and well-**being of Ohio's citizens. While we tend to take our sense of** vision for granted, it is considered by many to be our most important sense and is the window to opportunity for people of all ages. Without clear vision, children cannot clearly see their books and the blackboard and often lose focus and attention in the classroom; adults cannot see properly to work efficiently, losing productivity and opportunity; and, all of us lose the benefit of a sharper look at the busy world around us.

Making eye wear more affordable, especially for low income consumers, helps eliminate barriers to their purchase of updated eye wear. Those extra dollars may make it easier to get that needed eye exam and then purchase eyeglasses or contact lenses to ensure better sight in the classroom or the workplace. Corrective eye wear is a necessity for most people, not a luxury, and one that most jurisdictions do not tax. The overall exemption makes Ohio more competitive in the eye care marketplace and demonstrates the same concern for meeting healthcare needs that exemptions in other parts of the tax code already provide for a long list of prescription goods.

The NAOO respectfully requests your support for HB 116 and thanks the Committee for this opportunity to present our point of view.

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