



**State Representative Derek Merrin
District 47**

**House Bill 116 – Sponsor Testimony
Ways and Means Committee
March 21, 2017**

Chairman Schaffer, Vice-Chairman Scherer, Ranking Member Rogers, and members of the Ways and Means Committee. Thank you for allowing me to present testimony on House Bill 116, which repeals the sale and use tax on prescribed eyeglasses, frames, and contacts. Prescription eyewear is the only prescribed medical product sold in traditional retail stores taxed in Ohio. I strongly believe individuals requiring prescription eyewear and parents seeking to obtain eyeglasses for their children should not be taxed upon purchasing a medical necessity. This legislation will save taxpayers about \$23 million annually.

Eyeglasses and corrective contacts significantly improve Ohio lives – enabling many to maintain employment, learn, live safely, and have mobility. Only 13 states impose a tax on prescription eyewear. Ohio’s bordering states of Indiana, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia do not levy a tax. Michigan taxes prescribed contacts, but not eyeglasses. This places Ohio retailers and optometrists selling eyewear at a competitive disadvantage with our neighboring states that do not impose a tax.

Eyeglasses are pivotal to many children’s educational experiences. If children cannot clearly see, their ability to learn is restricted. Poor vision can lead to academic struggles that can have life-long consequences and potentially a negative fiscal impact for governments. As a child, I remember choosing the least expensive eyeglasses in the store, because I didn’t want to burden my financially-strapped parents. By taxing eyeglasses, government makes eyeglasses more expensive. Like with many necessities, most individuals ultimately get what they need, but will delay until they can afford it. Taxation provides another barrier that can contribute to delays with Ohioans’ securing updated prescription eyewear; it’s time to remove the barrier.

House Bill 116 will make eyeglasses more affordable and leave more money in Ohioans’ pockets. It brings uniformity to our tax code and makes Ohio’s retailers more competitive. It is time to reform our tax code and not penalize Ohioans that must have prescription eyewear to live a fulfilling life. I respectfully ask for your support and welcome any questions at this time.