



House Ways & Means Committee

House Bill 116 (Merrin)-Prescription Eye Wear-Sales Tax Exemption

Written Proponent Testimony

April 24, 2017

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chairman Scherer, Ranking Minority Member Rogers and members of the House Ways & Means Committee, my name is Mark Glasper and I am the Executive Director of the Opticians Association of Ohio. I am submitting written testimony in support of House Bill 116.

Opticians are licensed health professionals who fit eyeglasses and dispense contact lenses using prescriptions written by ophthalmologists and optometrists. They interpret prescriptions, educate the patient on the use and care of the product and adhere to safe practice standards. Licensed opticians are independent practitioners who work with retailers, optometrists, and ophthalmologists. There are over 5,000 licensed opticians and registered apprentices in Ohio.

House Bill 116 will benefit Ohio consumers who require prescription eye wear by exempting the cost of eyeglasses and contact lenses from sales tax. Pharmaceuticals and prosthetic equipment requiring a prescription are not taxed; yet, Ohio taxes optical aids, which are necessary for everyday living. In order for Ohio consumers to drive, work, read, and carry out daily living, it is imperative that they can properly see. It is disturbing that some consumers will turn to out-of-state entities or even the internet to have their prescriptions filled so as to avoid paying Ohio sales tax. This puts the consumer at risk of unlicensed and unregulated individuals interpreting their prescription and can ultimately increase health care costs when problems result from improperly interpreted prescriptions. Opticians are seeing more and more consumers with eye problems resulting from receiving the wrong type of contact lens, wrong prescription or improperly fitted glasses because they wanted to save money by filling their prescription across state lines or over the internet. In addition, the neighboring states of Indiana, West Virginia and Pennsylvania exempt prescriptive eyewear from the sales tax which serves as an economic disadvantage for consumers to keep their business in Ohio.

For the sake of Ohio consumers, we encourage you to pass House Bill 116. Not only does HB 116 make Ohio competitive with other states, it will also have the added benefit of increasing patient safety from citizens using qualified health care professionals in Ohio to interpret and fill those prescriptions instead of driving across state lines or using the internet to fill their eyewear prescriptions.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written support in favor of House Bill 116. We urge your passage of this important legislation.