



# Prevent Blindness

**Our Vision Is Vision.**

December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022

The Honorable Terry Johnson, MD  
Chair, Workforce and Higher Education Committee  
Ohio Senate  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Martin, and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee—

I am writing today on behalf of Prevent Blindness, Ohio Affiliate (PBO) to express concerns with potential changes to optician licensure currently being considered for a substitute bill for House Bill 509. Licensed opticians play a valuable role in protecting sight and promoting vision health, and I am hopeful the committee will consider keeping these provisions out of HB 509.

PBO is the largest charity in the Buckeye State focused on preventing blindness and preserving sight. We serve more than 1,000,000 Ohioans annually through outreach, education, and assistance. We often partner with licensed healthcare professionals including pediatricians, optometrists, ophthalmologists, and opticians to advance our mission.

I understand the intent of the committee's report and substitute bill is to reduce unnecessary or burdensome licenses and related provisions. We all want Ohio to be a great place to work and live. However, I would argue that licensure of spectacle dispensing opticians, contact lens dispensing opticians, spectacle-contact lens dispensing opticians, and ocularists are necessary and should be maintained in Ohio. Licensed opticians are recognized by Medicaid to fill prescriptions for low-income Ohioans; the loss of licensure will create an access issue for Medicaid enrollees. This could also impact access for non-Medicaid consumers as many optical vendors require a licensed professional to place or fill a prescriptive order. The end result could mean barriers to optical care for low-income and rural communities.

I would also argue that Ohio's optician licensure gives us a competitive advantage over neighboring states. According to data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in May 2021, the mean wage for Ohio opticians exceeded that of all of our border states. In this instance, licensure is not a barrier to entering the workforce, but a pathway to a better income.

In closing, I strongly believe that optician licensure should be maintained in Ohio. It is in the best interest of our citizens, especially those with the greatest need. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Amy Pulles  
Chief Executive Officer  
Prevent Blindness, Ohio Affiliate