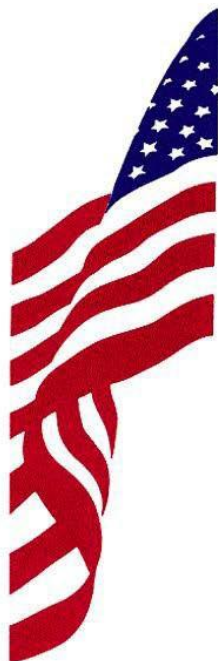


February 26, 2026

The Honorable Members
Ohio Senate Health Committee
Ohio Senate
77 South High St.
Columbus, OH 43215



**SERVING
WITH
PRIDE**

Dear Members of the Senate Health Committee,

AMVETS, which is also known as American Veterans, is the most inclusive Congressionally chartered veteran service organization open to representing the interests of 20 million veterans and their families, including countless Ohio veterans. Since 1944, we have proudly served veterans and maintain a special focus on advancing quality health care and expanded access through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health system.

On behalf of the more than 600,000 veterans living in Ohio, we are writing to urge you to support Senate Bill 36. This important legislation would give Ohio veterans and other citizens the ability to seek needed laser eye care procedures from trusted, local doctors of optometry. For veterans, such a move would be a sizeable step forward as the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs struggles to keep up with demand for needed eye care, which is currently the third-most veteran-requested service - behind only primary care and mental health care.

Through the VA's Community Care Program, Veterans across the country are afforded the ability to seek laser eye care from "an optometrist or an ophthalmologist based on the licensure of the provider." While many veterans prefer to seek care from their closest VA facility, having private practice optometry available as an access to care force multiplier has proven extremely valuable to those not within range of a local VA facility, especially considering that roughly 40 percent of U.S. counties or county-equivalents have access to a doctor of optometry but not an ophthalmologist and that the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration predicts a growing shortage of about 6,000 ophthalmologists by the year 2025.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer our opinion on this important matter. We look forward to working with you and other leaders across the state to do more for veterans and their families who need and deserve assured access to essential high-quality health care services.

Yours in service to our nation's veterans,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph R. Chenelly".

Joseph R. Chenelly
National Executive Director
AMVETS National Headquarters



A M V E T S

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