



Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Dennis R. Schrader, Acting Secretary

**Maryland Board of Examiners in Optometry**  
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February 10, 2021

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass  
Chair, Health and Government Affairs Committee  
House Office Building, Room 241  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: HB 551- Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance –  
Coverage and Reimbursement of Telehealth Services - Letter of Concern**

Dear Chair Pendergrass:

The Maryland Board of Examiners in Optometry (the “Board”) is submitting this Letter of Concern for HB 551 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance – Coverage and Reimbursement of Telehealth Services.

Telehealth, which includes the related concept of telemedicine, is a rapidly-evolving tool for the delivery of health information and services. The Board supports the appropriate use of eye and vision telehealth services to supplement access to high-value, high-quality eye and vision care because when used appropriately, can serve to improve patient coordination and communication among and between doctors of optometry and ophthalmologists, as well as other primary care or specialty care providers.

Though we may have differences between eye and vision services delivered via telehealth and the diagnosis and health care delivered in-person by an eye doctor, any differences must *take into account Standard of care to promote the health of the citizens of Maryland. This means that Standard of care must remain the same regardless of whether eye and vision services are provided in-person, remotely via telehealth, or through any combination thereof.* Eye and vision telehealth services cannot, based on current technologies and uses, replace an in-person comprehensive eye examination provided by an eye doctor to issue a refractive prescription either for eyeglasses and /or contact lenses.

Moving eye and vision services to a telehealth platform would negatively impact patient safety for the following reasons:

- Telehealth refractive services rarely take into account a patient's medical background nor do they maintain the same standard of care.

- Telehealth refractive services do not facilitate patient care coordination with primary care when a serious medical condition is detected.
- Many times, the prescribing doctor is out-of-state which does not allow for adequate follow up.
- Telehealth refractive services are delivered using devices not approved by the FDA.
- Refractive tests, including online vision tests and other mobile vision-related applications, cannot be, based on current technologies and uses, used to provide a refractive diagnosis and/or an eyeglass or contact lens prescription, due, in part, to these tests not currently including a controlled testing environment, subjective refraction, or professional judgement. Additionally, self-administered vision tests, based on current technologies and uses, and cannot be relied on as accurate for an objective refraction.
- Photographs obtained by patients, their family members, or their friends outside of a clinical setting may not be of adequate quality, or may not include the information needed to make an accurate diagnosis.

Thank you for your consideration of the Board's concerns and if you have any additional questions, please contact the Board's Executive Director, Patricia G. Bennett at 443-934-0816 or [patricia.bennett@maryland.gov](mailto:patricia.bennett@maryland.gov).

Sincerely,  
*Patricia G. Bennett*

Patricia G. Bennett  
Board Executive Director

cc: Delegate Bagnall

*The opinion of the Board expressed in this document does not necessarily reflect that of the Department of Health or the Administration.*