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TO: House Health and Human Services Committee

FROM: Todd Fleischer, CAE
Executive Director

RE: Testimony Regarding HB 2254

My name is Todd Fleischer. I am the Executive Director of the Kansas Optometric Association, which represents optometrists across Kansas. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding House Bill 2254.

As primary eye care providers, optometrists not only diagnose and treat vision problems and eye disease, but also detect a multitude of other health issues, ranging from high blood pressure and diabetes to glaucoma and other significant health concerns. Early detection and treatment can have significant effect on a patient's overall health and result in considerable cost savings.

Optometrists are not included in the language of House Bill 2254. However, while we are blessed with members serving communities across the state, we believe that telemedicine is an important patient care issue that needs to be addressed as it may become an integral part of the health care delivery system as other professions face shortages of providers, particularly in rural areas.

It is our understanding that the proponents of the bill are seeking to define telemedicine and reinforce that health care delivered through telecommunications should involve the same standard of care as in-person care. We fully support that position.

There are currently organizations who are using online and other computer-based programs to generate an approximate eyeglass or contact lens prescription, without the individual ever seeing an optometrist or ophthalmologist. These eliminate all components and aspects of an exam that deal with eye health. While some may not see the harm in this, the consequences can be significant.

An appropriate in-person eye exam can detect a number of health issues, and what a patient assumes is just his or her eyesight failing could actually be symptoms associated with diabetes, glaucoma or even a tumor that is affecting vision. That is why standard of care dictates that an exam includes certain components and that an optometrist or ophthalmologist licensed in Kansas can only delegate certain

components of an exam to an onsite technician. Standard of care for contact lenses also requires additional testing and proper fitting of the lenses, which can vary in oxygen permeability and design. Improper fitting and no training on proper contact lens wear and care can lead to discomfort, corneal abrasions, corneal ulcers and other conditions that can permanently affect vision.

We support a patient's right to purchase their contacts or prescription eyewear wherever they choose, but we believe that it is only after an appropriate comprehensive in-office exam by an optometrist or ophthalmologist.

If the committee chooses to work this bill, we believe it is important to clearly define telemedicine and standard of care to make sure there is an appropriate balance between consumer convenience and good health care for patients in Kansas.

Thank you for your careful consideration of HB 2254.