



February 19, 2017

Dear Senate Health & Welfare Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Vermont Optometric Association offering support for the Telemedicine bill referred to as S.50. Thank you for supporting this important legislation.

S.50 currently does not include Optometry. It is important that as telemedicine moves to the forefront of accepted and practiced medicine that patients continue to have access to providers, have parity of services, and the opportunity to enjoy continuity of care.

Optometrists in Vermont see, diagnose, treat, and refer patients with complex systemic and ocular disease. The interactions between systemic conditions and ocular conditions often mean that we provide the first line of care to patients. Much like other providers detailed within S.50 we provide extensive counseling regarding the patient's overall general health in addition to any ocular conditions.

It is important to remember that Optometrists within the State of Vermont provide the majority of our eyecare. Optometrists provide patients access to the healthcare system, offer timely care, and often in rural settings.

I am respectfully requesting the committee consider adding:

(o) A fully licensed optometrists pursuant to 26 VSA chapter 30

It is important to mention that Telemedicine further please remember that there really is no substitute for an in person visits. As a provider, I understand the need to explore new avenues to change the way care is provided, particularly when it comes to expenses, but I have some sense of alarm about the

quality of care that my (or any patients/Vermonters) could receive if these technologies are not used properly. Telemedicine is emerging and we may not yet see potential abuse.

Thank you for your consideration,

Dean Barcelow

President Vermont Optometric Association