



Sen. Floyd Prozanski, Chair  
Senate Judiciary Committee  
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Salem, OR 97301

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today on behalf of our patient's safety. My name is Nicole Rush. I am an Optometric Physician with two private practices on the Southern Coast of Oregon. Living in such a rural area, my patient's eye health takes precedent both day and night, as we don't have easy access to any urgent care facilities or specialists. In fact, the nearest eye care provider to me is 60 miles to the south, 60 miles to the east or 30 miles to the north. I see patients at all hours of the week, as well as weekends. A substantial amount of the eye health issues I see are contact lens related. This is a very real problem!

Contact lenses are a federally regulated medical device and as such, a doctor's supervision for their proper fit and use is required. A contact lens prescription written by an eye doctor includes:

- The **curvature** of the the lens that sits on the eye;
- The **diameter** of the lens which assures that the cornea has adequate coverage by the lens so that the blood vessels on the corneal edge are not disrupted and that it centers appropriately on the eye;
- The **power** of the lens and the rotation **alignment** for the astigmatism;
- The **material** which determines the oxygen transmitted by the lens and how it stays wet on the eye;
- The **wearing schedule**. Some people can only wear a contact lens safely for a few hours while others can sleep in them safely. The doctor needs to decide that for each individual patient;
- The **replacement cycle**. Some lenses need to be replaced sooner on some patients than others due to protein or lipid build-up on the lenses. The doctor needs to decide that for each individual patient.

Every single one of these parameters can adversely affect the patient's vision and ocular health if not chosen properly. How can an online retailer know this information? How can an online vision screening replace the need for this proper fitting? Not all contact lenses are created equal. On 1-800 Contacts website, they require a patient to choose their curvature from a list of options. How is a patient to know that answer without a fitting by an eye doctor?

Not only is the initial fit important, but continued analysis is crucial too. Those of you on the committee that require some sort of vision correction know that your eyes are changing constantly. Otherwise, you would just purchase one pair of eyeglasses for your entire life. And not only is your vision correction constantly changing, but so is the overall shape of your eye, your tear film chemistry and your corneal oxygen requirements. These things can happen for many reasons such as aging, ever changing systemic health or even medications.

There are many things about eyes that need to be reviewed yearly to assure our patient's best vision and eye health. In my 15 years of practice, I have seen such misuse of contact lenses that

even some patients have caused permanent scarring of their corneas, leaving them with life long vision loss and the inability to ever wear contact lenses again. What is most appalling is that almost every case could have been avoided with proper care of the lenses by the patient and appropriate follow-up care with an eye doctor.

According to a CDC study<sup>1</sup> from 2014, 1 Million Americans each year visit Emergency Rooms and doctor's offices due to Keratitis, an infection of the cornea generally associated with improper care of contact lenses, costing the health care system \$175M per year. Eye doctors can help keep that number from growing with the proper care and supervision of our contact lens patients. But that number will skyrocket if we allow an online retailer, who never sees our patients, to make contact lens fitting decisions.

I had a patient in my office just last week who had been to the ER the night before. Her eye hurt so much that she couldn't even open it and she was now on day 3 of missing work. Prior to seeing me she hadn't made any connection to her contact lenses. She said she had been wearing some contact lenses that she purchased online for over 6 months now. She had no idea that they were actually suppose to be replaced between 2 and 4 weeks. This lens was completely molded to her eye when I saw her, and she not only had an infection of her cornea, but also a bunch of new blood vessels growing into her cornea, which is suppose to be clear. We have discontinued her contact lenses at this point and started treatment, but it is still to be determined if she will be able to wear contact lenses again in the future. This woman is lucky she didn't go blind in this eye, but not every contact lens story has a happy ending.

So in closing, my colleagues and I do insist on the best contact lens products to meet each patient's needs. Each is unique and we want to protect them from any harm they may experience from misusing contact lenses. Our patients trust us with one of their most valued possessions, their eyesight. We are hopeful that you will join with the Oregon Optometric Physicians Association in putting Oregon residents' healthcare ahead of corporate profits. By **OPPOSING SB 1576** today, I believe you will be sending the message to the people of Oregon that their elected Representatives do indeed have their best interests in mind.

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<sup>1</sup> Collier S, Gronostaj M, MacGurn A, Cope J, Awsumb K, Yoder J, Beach M. Estimated Burden of Keratitis -United States. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report CDC. November 14, 2014 / 63(45);1027-1030.