



February 23, 2018

The Honorable Matt Bevin
Governor, Commonwealth of Kentucky
700 Capitol Avenue, Suite 100
Frankfort, KY 40601

Dear Governor Bevin:

We the undersigned organizations, who share your positive vision of limited government and economic opportunity for the Commonwealth of Kentucky, write to express our concern about a proposal in the legislature that could endanger future cost-saving, quality-enhancing technologies for your citizens.

As you may know, House Bill 191, currently before the Senate, would create a new thicket of regulations to effectively eliminate the ability of Kentuckians to access online renewal for corrective vision prescriptions. This proven technology allows certain individuals who have previously seen an eye-care provider in person to receive a renewal prescription via testing services using a computer and smart phone. Strict standards for who qualifies to receive this service, as well as evaluations from licensed eye care providers, ensure that the process is safe and effective. For these reasons alone, consumer organizations, advocates for moderate-income families, and agencies such as the Federal Trade Commission all support the option of online eye care. However, HB 191, which some members of the optometrist community favor for creating unfair barriers against competition with their retail operations, should be troubling to fiscal conservatives as well:

- 1) Governments should be making regulatory burdens less onerous, allowing new services and technologies to participate more fully in the marketplace. Three-quarters of the states allow online vision prescription renewals, while the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs utilizes the technology for several eye care applications.
- 2) Compared to in-person exam fees, online vision services are less expensive and more convenient. State and local government workers, who have vision care through their employer, can save both time and money to the taxpayer-funded system compensating them.
- 3) As Medicaid programs continue to evolve in offering vision services, online options will become increasingly important in delivering quality care that is affordable to taxpayers. This is especially true in

Kentucky, where Medicaid participants may have easier access to an online connection and smart phone (even through a friend or family member) than they would to an eye care provider's office that could be miles away from their homes.

4) If Kentucky's ambitious post-Affordable Care Act overhaul of Medicaid is to succeed, it is important for the Commonwealth to avail itself of every advantage afforded by technologies. To give one example, the proposed work requirement for able-bodied Medicaid recipients would be made more viable by innovations that allow workers to obtain eyeglass and contact lens prescription renewals more affordably and conveniently, without taking costly time off their jobs.

Online technologies have a key role in improving quality and controlling costs for vision services, as well as more complex health care situations. Kentucky should be moving forward into this realm rather than retreating from it. For all these reasons, we hope you will consider contacting your fiscally conservative colleagues in the Senate to express reservations over HB 191. We encourage you to review the enclosed materials for further information on this vital issue. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Pete Sepp, President, National Taxpayers Union

Wayne Brough, Ph.D, Chief Economist and VP for Research, FreedomWorks

Andrew Langer, President, Institute for Liberty

Ian Adams, Associate Vice President of State Affairs, R Street Institute

David Williams, President, Taxpayers Protection Alliance

Enclosures:

June 15, 2017 Coalition Letter

August 2, 2017 Coalition Letter

February 21, 2018 Kentucky.com Op-ed