

**Statement of Brian T. Lynch, OD
Before the Public Health Committee
In Support of #SB781**

Sen. Harris, Rep. Ritter and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dr. Brian T. Lynch. I am an optometrist who has practiced in Branford for 27 years. Currently I serve as legislative chair for the Connecticut Association of Optometrists. I appear before you today to urge your support of SB781, An Act Concerning Therapeutic Contact Lenses.

All healthcare providers practice legislated professions. Simply put, how we practice and care for our patients is defined by statutes. In 1996, this committee defined the practice of "advance optometric care" as what it is today. The statutes adopted by the general assembly were based on public safety and need, provider training, and available technologies at that time. As these factors change, we periodically find ourselves needing to "tweak" our statutes to address advances in healthcare and patients' requirements.

In 1996 the concept of a contact lens impregnated with a pharmaceutical to treat a patient's allergy symptoms wasn't on the horizon. Thanks to Johnson and Johnson it will soon be available. However, patients in Connecticut will have very limited access to it.

Currently, optometrists who are the primary suppliers of contact lenses are prohibited from supplying any more than a 72-hour supply of a pharmaceutical to their patients. Pharmacies in Connecticut do not sell contact lenses. Opticians can't supply any pharmaceuticals to their customers, leaving only one supplier: ophthalmologists, whose statutes don't prohibit them from dispensing.

Contrary to what you may have been told, this is not a "scope of practice" issue. Once the FDA approves this product, Connecticut optometrists will be able to sample patients and prescribe for them without any statute change. It is, however, an "access issue." Limiting a patient's access to this revolutionary product and restricting a patient's freedom to choose where they want to purchase this product is not sound policy.

Please support SB781 and empower patients to choose.