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Statement of Erin McCleary, OD
S.B. No. 982, An Act Revising Motor Vehicle Statutes
Transportation Committee
March 8, 2021

Good Day Senator Cassano, Representative Lemar, Representative Simms, Senator Somers, Representative Carney and members of the Committee, I would like to thank the entire Transportation Committee for the opportunity to speak with you again today regarding **Raised Senate Bill 982, An Act Revising Motor Vehicle Statutes**, with regards to modifications to the current DMV statutes. My name is Dr. Erin McCleary, a board-certified optometrist who is licensed, and has been practicing advanced optometric care, in Connecticut for the last 14 years. I am the Immediate Past-President of the Connecticut Association of Optometrists and currently own and practice at Clear Horizon Eyecare in Plainville, CT.

First of all, I would like to applaud the committee for continuing to support vision screening as a requirement for licensure. As an eye care provider, I certainly feel that a vision assessment should be required for all drivers within the state of Connecticut. In addition, I wanted to voice my support for the amended language in **Sec 19 and 20** regarding how these vision screenings may be obtained. The newly revised language [lines 806-813 and 1071-1077] specifically adds back a vision screening assessment provided by DMV services OR allows the applicant to obtain said vision screening verification from a medical professional. (As defined in **section 14-46c**, these are appropriate medical providers, inclusive of ophthalmology and optometry alike.)

Previous renditions removed the option of having an applicant obtain the needed vision screening from the DMV offered services, and instead required the vision assessment to be completed by a medical professional. This move would have had an impact on both drivers and physicians alike. First of all, license applicants would have carried the burden of obtaining the appropriate vision screening at a physician's office at a cost, possibly not covered by their insurance. Secondly, if a license applicant requested "only" a vision screening for DMV purposes, there became a question of medical / professional liability on the medical professional's behalf. For example, what would happen if a person (specifically, a non-historical-patient) comes in for a simple screening (moreover, a screening is NOT equivalent to a comprehensive eye exam) and an ocular condition is not discovered because the evaluation was limited to the vision and visual field requirements? The DMV would have no accountability by performing a vision screening on their premises, but an ophthalmologist or optometrist may be at risk if only visual acuity and gross visual fields were obtained.

Further, in the process of modifying the language of the statute from "vision screening" to medical professionals certifying that the applicant meets the "**vision standards established in regulations adopted under section 14-45a**," this is in fact actually more inclusive of evaluating the patient for "**(3) No evidence of any other visual condition(s) which either alone or in combination will significantly impair driving ability**." In essence, it appears to mandate comprehensive eye exams in place of a simple screening at the medical professional's office. By amending the language to include actual *vision screenings* at the DMV OR submitted vision assessment results from their medical professional, eye care providers are now able to perform needed evaluations without concern over liability. They may complete their comprehensive exams, and submit the necessary data – or the patient may obtain a simpler screening at the DMV.

In closing, I feel strongly that a vision assessment is truly needed prior to granting a driver's license. The previous language which removed vision screenings from the DMV services would have had a direct impact on both the license applicants and medical professionals needing to fill the gap. I am immensely pleased that the committee took my suggestions to heart and has amended the language to now allow EITHER a free DMV screening OR a visual assessment certification by the previously-defined medical professionals. This gives back the benefit of choice to the constituent and providers can perform full eye exams without concern for liability. For those applicants concerned about COVID, and who don't want to have potential increased exposure risk at the DMV, they can choose to see their own personal health professional. In addition, this will help spread the number of vision screenings between the DMV and already-busy doctor offices. Ultimately this is about the safety of our Connecticut residents, and this language ensures that license applicants have access to the rightfully-required vision screening, but on their terms.

Thank you for your time.

Erin McCleary, OD

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