



NORTH DAKOTA  
Optometric Association

HOUSE BILL 1102

February 11, 2021

Senate Transportation Committee Hearing

3:00 PM – Fort Totten Room

House Bill 1102 (Online Driver's License Renewals)

Good Afternoon Members of the Senate Transportation Committee,

My name is Nancy Kopp, Executive Director for the North Dakota Optometric Association. I am presenting written testimony in opposition to HB 1102, simply out of PUBLIC SAFETY CONCERNS and ask that you consider either deliberating the issue of the DOT's use of vision information provided by the applicant to meet vision requirements, on lines 7-9, or amend the bill to a study of the concerns. I am also including written testimony that I intended to provide the House Transportation Committee on January 8, 2021, but failed to fulfill the online submission, for their consideration. As you know, the House Transportation Committee did pass HB 1102, with a vote of 9-5, but with some valid concerns raised.

In addition to the supplemental clinical testimony from eye and vision care providers, most recently we share recent actual patient encounters, regarding eye examinations for patients in the 65-70 age group, regarding DOT vision requirements, as follows: (Dr. Brittany Schauer)

“I specifically noticed that I had one person on Friday and one person yesterday, in the 65 to 70 age group, that had not had a recent exam (one had been over 3 years, the other had been over 15 years) and both would NOT have passed the vision portion of the DOT test, and both claimed they didn't have a restriction. One had glasses that quite clearly needed to be updated and the other did not have glasses.”

“I was appalled that the one patient told me that he/she had just renewed their license in October, and he/she is 20/150 OD and OS during the exam - no glasses. There is no way they should have passed that recently, being over 3 times worse the standard of 20/40.”

This makes me question the validity of the DOT test. I have also heard numerous reports from patients that if they fail, depending on who is administering the test, they might let them try again right away and then "pass" them if they "just made it". I would question if the DOT needs to re-examine their testing procedures.

Plus, if the DOT's reasoning for wanting to pass this is that everyone was closed for COVID .... why is that a reason? That's just an inconvenience - not a reason to change law. The DOT was being lenient with allowing people to renew past their expiration in light of the events. Why does that constitute changing something that is keeping us safe? What about the people age 75-80 that couldn't renew their license? What about age 80-85? Where do we draw the line?

Come to think of it, I had a patient in their 30's just this morning. The patient was 20/60 OD and 2/50 OS and was out of CLs and did not bring his/her backup glasses. They claimed they didn't have a vision restriction on their license. This happens quite frequently.

This concludes the North Dakota Optometric Association's written testimony, in relation to HB 1102. Thank you in advance for your support of a DO NOT PASS on HB 1102 or amend to a study in the interim, to address public safety concerns.

I would be happy to attempt to answer your questions.

Nancy Kopp – NDOA Executive Director

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## HOUSE BILL 1102

January 8, 2021

House Transportation Committee Hearing

9:00 A.M.

Room: 327 E

House Bill 1102 (Online Driver's License Renewals)

Good Morning Members of the House Transportation Committee,

My name is Nancy Kopp, Executive Director for the North Dakota Optometric Association, Registered Lobbyist #116 and present written testimony in opposition to HB 1102, as presented. On behalf of the NDOA, I submit written testimony from Dr. Brittney Schauer, a practicing optometrist at Vision Source-Mandan, as follows:

“As you may remember, I testified during the 2017 Legislative Session, to raise some questions regarding online driver's license renewal! I think technology has its place but, I'm not a fan of their current process. The vision component is too much on the honor system, in that all the person has to do is click a button to "*I swear I can see fine*" and are allowed to proceed with a renewal, for the next 6 years (if they did not have a previous restriction).”

As we all know, the incidence of eye diseases such as **glaucoma, diabetes, macular degeneration** and **cataracts** increase with age and I would have strong opposition to raising the age from 65 to 70 for online renewal. I don't have concern for those that already have a vision restriction on their license, because we know they would be required to upload documentation for their vision for an online renewal, but I have great concern for those that would be able to "click the button" on the honor system. Let's face it, patients flat out are in denial or stretch the truth (the same way that drivers still choose to speed, not wear their seatbelt, etc.) and then there are also some patients that honestly do not realize their vision has deteriorated.

Patients often argue with me (when I tell them they need glasses to drive) that "I can see a car just fine". Yes, you can, but they do not realize how blurred vision slows your reaction time due to the processing effort of the brain. These milliseconds can be the very difference between getting into an accident, or not. Or worse ... running over a child that has ran after their ball into the street. The brain can process a clear image much faster than a blurry one, which improves safety on the road for all those involved.

I and the NDOA members would agree with the NDDOT "Vision Zero Campaign's" mission to reduce traffic accidents and death, in advocating the fact that "Our eyes are the number one way we gather and interpret information while driving. Our vision allows us to see hazards and react in a timely fashion to prevent accidents". In order to accomplish the clarification of "accountability" of assurance that our aging drivers are protecting themselves, as well as the general population, in their ability to drive safely, the NDOA believes that if a driver's license renewal applicant age 65-69, without a restriction on their driver's license, especially with this age group, should be required to provide vision screening information, or eye examination signed by a licensed eye care provider, on a form provided by the department. If the applicant, for whatever reason, such as a COVID pandemic, is unable to obtain a DOT vision screening, to meet vision requirements in person, the NDOA is quite confident that continuing to utilize the current technologies available today, to applicants, the DOT and eye care providers, that the electronic sharing of confidential health information, can reduce the burden on DOT and retain patient/doctor relationships, in assuring public safety, as it relates to driver safety. Self-attestation of one's vision or eye health, as opposed to reporting by trained professionals, should not be acceptable for driver's safety policies and procedures.

This concludes the North Dakota Optometric Association's written testimony, in relation to HB 1102. If you have any questions or concerns, please be assured that we will follow-up to discuss. Thank you in advance for your support of a DO NOT PASS on HB 1102 and of our concerns.

Nancy Kopp – NDOA Executive Director

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