



February 25, 2013

The Honorable Lindsey Holmes
Alaska House of Representatives
State Capitol Room 415
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Holmes:

On behalf of the American Academy of Ophthalmology and the Alaska Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons, and our worldwide membership of over 31,000 medical eye physicians and surgeons, we are writing to thank you for sponsoring HB 125, currently pending in the House Labor and Commerce Committee.

HB 125 would require insurance coverage for prescription topical medications by authorizing a refill or renewal even when it is requested prior to the expiration of the intended period of use.

Patients often have problems applying the medication to the eye on the first attempt. For example, it is sometimes difficult for a patient to successfully place a drop of medication into the eye via an eye dropper. This act is even more challenging for senior citizens or parents.

Patients suffering from degenerative eye diseases are required to use topical eye medications. Insurance plans typically allow and pay for a one-month or a three-month supply of medication. Payers calculate when a medication will run out and then determine when the prescription can be refilled. This is not a problem with a pill, but topical eye medications are completely different.

Prescription eye medications are essential for the preservation of sight. Without access to prescription medications on a continuous basis, patients may risk further loss of sight, accompanied by enormous anxiety while waiting for a refill prescription to become available. Topical medications can run out early for three reasons: (1) the lack of standard measurement in titration in eye droppers; (2) the amount of medication in a bottle is not enough to cover the time period for which it is prescribed; and (3) the large wastage that occurs when drops or ointment are applied poorly by patients. As a result of these factors, all too often the prescribed eye drop or ointment runs out before it is scheduled to be refilled. Without access to this eye medication on a continuous basis, patients risk further loss of sight and increased medical costs.

For these reasons, the Alaska Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons, as well as the Academy, thank you for sponsoring HB 125.

Sincerely,

Paul Sternberg Jr., MD
President
American Academy of
Ophthalmology

Cynthia A. Bradford, MD
Senior Secretary for Advocacy
American Academy of
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Scott Limstrom, MD
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