



COALITION for CONTACT LENS CONSUMER CHOICE

For Immediate Release

November 16, 2016

Contact: Kara Ferguson, (202.331.7771)

Kara@BlueEngineMedia.com

Coalition for Contact Lens Consumer Choice Praises FTC's Proposed Changes to the Contact Lens Rule

***Group Hails Addition of a Strong Consumer Rights Provision;
Notes FTC's Rejection of Proposals to Weaken Consumer Protections***

WASHINGTON, D.C. – On November 10, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) issued [proposed changes](#) to its Contact Lens Rule, the regulatory framework that implements the landmark Fairness to Contact Lens Consumers Act of 2003 (FCLCA). The [Coalition for Contact Lens Consumer Choice](#), a coalition of companies, consumer groups and good government advocacy organizations dedicated to protecting the rights of contact lens consumers, praised the FTC's action.

"If adopted, the FTC's proposed changes to the Contact Lens Rule would mark a major victory for contact lens consumers across the country," said **Cindy Williams, General Counsel for 1-800 Contacts**, a Coalition for Contact Lens Consumer Choice member. The Commission conducted a thorough and thoughtful review of the rule, which included a year-long examination of over 660 comments and numerous studies, surveys and medical evidence. These changes to the rule would strengthen enforcement of consumer rights and help address the primary deficiency of the current system, that optometrists routinely fail to automatically provide their patients with a copy of their contact lens prescription. What the FTC is proposing are common sense, minimally-burdensome rule changes that both optometrists and consumers can and should support."

The FTC is proposing to require optometrists to obtain a signed acknowledgement after providing a prescription to a consumer, and to keep that acknowledgement on file for three years. This requirement will provide the FTC with a means to track those who are failing to follow this procedure and take action on behalf of consumers' rights when each case warrants.

Under current law, the Fairness to Contact Lens Consumer Act of 2003 (FCLCA), optometrists are required to automatically provide prescriptions to consumers at the time of their examination, whether or not the consumer asks for it, so that the consumer can take the prescription to purchase contact lenses from alternative, often lower cost, retailers, if they so choose. In its proposed rulemaking, the FTC noted that the weight of evidence indicated that "*compliance with the automatic prescription release provision could be substantially improved.*" The FTC also expressed that this proposed change "*is likely to spur more competition and innovation among contact lens sellers and manufacturers.*"

Notably, the FTC also indicated that the health claims made by the American Optometric Association (AOA), the lobbying group representing optometrists, contact lens manufacturers and their joint advocacy group, the Coalition for Patient Vision Care Safety,

were not supported by reliable empirical evidence. Specifically, the FTC found no increased risk from buying contact lenses from alternative retailers, stating "*the Commission has not seen reliable empirical evidence to support a finding that such sales are contributing to an increased incidence, or increased risk, of contact lens-related eye problems.*" This FTC conclusion is consistent with numerous medical studies that have found no connection between eye health problems and the location where contact lenses are purchased.

About the Coalition for Contact Lens Consumer Choice

The Coalition for Contact Lens Consumer Choice serves as a voice for 41 million American contact lens consumers by advocating for continued consumer choice in the contact lens market. The Coalition opposes legislative and regulatory proposals at the federal and state levels that would limit the ability of consumers to purchase contact lenses from the retailer of their choice, whether online, in stores or over-the-phone.

More information about the coalition can be found at KeepContactLensChoice.org.

#