

HEIDI HEITKAMP  
NORTH DAKOTA  
HART SENATE BUILDING 516  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510  
PH: 202-224-2043  
FAX: 202-224-7776  
TOLL FREE: 1-800-223-4457

<http://www.heitkamp.senate.gov>

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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COMMITTEES:  
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION AND FORESTRY  
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SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The Honorable Maureen K. Ohlhausen  
Acting Chairwoman  
Federal Trade Commission  
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20580

Dear Acting Chairwoman Ohlhausen,

Vision health is incredibly important because it can impact our everyday lives. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, roughly 11 million people over the age of 12 need vision correction. Therefore, it is critical that both adults and children receive routine eye exams performed by an optometrist or ophthalmologist. Maintaining vision or finding the right corrective lenses helps provide a good quality of life. Vision problems for children can often become a distraction in the classroom, impacting the time they could be learning. Adults need to monitor their eyes' health because age brings with it an increased risk of glaucoma and macular degeneration which are known to cause blindness.

The Fairness to Contact Lens Consumer Act was established in 2004 and mandated that eye care professionals, like optometrists and ophthalmologists, release patient prescription information. Patients are then able to use their prescription information to search for contact lenses or glasses at various optician stores or eye clinics. Unfortunately, online sellers of contact lenses have engaged in the practice of not requiring a valid prescription with the purchase of contact lenses. Contacts, according to federal law, are considered prescription medical devices and online sites that do not require a valid prescription are putting the nation's contact wearers' at risk for developing serious eye issues. Without a proper eye exam, consumers may not know if their cornea can safely tolerate contact lens or their accurate prescription. Online sellers should always require a valid prescription from the buyer before they are able to sell their product.

I recently met with an optometrist and owner of an eye care facility in my state. She informed me of the risks many consumers face from buying contact lenses through an online site that does not verify the consumer's prescription. Consumers may think a contact lens can do no harm to one's health, but that can be far from the case. I have attached a photo the optometrist showed me to demonstrate the detrimental effects of not using a valid prescription when ordering contact lenses and the wear it can have on one's eye.

I would encourage the Federal Trade Commission to focus on ensuring online sites that sell contact lenses are continuing to ask for consumers' valid prescriptions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Heidi Heitkamp  
United States Senate

BISMARCK OFFICE:  
228 FEDERAL BUILDING  
220 EAST ROSSER AVENUE  
BISMARCK, ND 58501  
PH: 701-258-4648  
FAX: 701-258-1254

DICKINSON OFFICE:  
40 1ST AVENUE WEST  
SUITE 202  
DICKINSON, ND 58601  
PH: 701-225-0974  
FAX: 701-225-3287

FARGO OFFICE:  
306 FEDERAL BUILDING  
657 SECOND AVENUE NORTH  
FARGO, ND 58102  
PH: 701-232-8030 - 1-800-223-4457  
FAX: 701-232-6449

GRAND FORKS OFFICE:  
33 S. 3RD ST., SUITE B  
GRAND FORKS, ND 58201  
PH: 701-775-9601  
FAX: 701-746-1990

MINOT OFFICE:  
105 FEDERAL BUILDING  
100 FIRST STREET S.W.  
MINOT, ND 58701  
PH: 701-852-0703  
FAX: 701-838-8196