



**WISCONSIN ACADEMY  
OF OPHTHALMOLOGY**

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**TO: Representative Kevin Petersen, Chair  
Members, Assembly Committee on Insurance**

**FROM: Suzanne Falkenberry, MD, Vice-President**

**DATE: February 1, 2018**

**RE: Support for Assembly Bill 876**

On behalf of the more than 400 members of the Wisconsin Academy of Ophthalmology, we appreciate the opportunity provide testimony in support of Assembly Bill 876 – coverage for early prescription eye drop refills. It is important for the committee to understand precisely what AB 876 does.

Prescriptions for eye drop medications are written in a form similar to this:

Place 1 drop in each eye twice daily for 30 days; two refills authorized.

In the bottle there will be enough medication to cover that anticipated 120 drops prescribed, and the patient can have the prescription refilled twice before returning to her/his doctor to receive a new one. Unlike pills, however, it is very easy to waste eye drop medications and patients regularly run out of eye drop medications before the anticipated days-usage. Medicare Part D allows early refills of eye drop medications once 70% of the anticipated days-usage has passed (or after 21 days for a 30-day prescription); Wisconsin Medicaid similarly allows early refills at 80%. AB 876 requires that Wisconsin health plans authorize early refills at 75% of the anticipated days-usage.

AB 876 does not require health plans to cover any medications. AB 876 does not require health plans to cover any additional refills not prescribed by a patient's doctor. AB 876 simply requires health plans to authorize early refills of medication they already cover so patients do not go without sight-saving medicines.

Many Wisconsin health plans already authorize early eye drop refills voluntarily. But ophthalmologists and optometrists regularly hear from patients whose eye drops have run out early and whose health plan will not pay for a refill until the original prescription length has expired. Many of these patients cannot afford to pay for a refill from their own pocket and instead may go without medication. With eye conditions like glaucoma, even a brief period without medication can lead to permanent eye damage to the patient's eye and eyesight.

AB 876 does not require health plans to cover or pay for anything they do not already cover – simply that they do so earlier for eye drop medications if necessary. More than 25 states already require early eye drop refills by health plans; please help us add Wisconsin to this sight-saving list.