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NEW LAW WILL HELP MORE SEE CLEARLY NOW

Sen. Jacque's initiative removes barrier to help charities give the gift of sight to the poor

MADISON, WI... Charitable organizations received a helping hand in their mission to bring much-needed eyeglasses to the poor, thanks to an initiative authored by State Sen. André Jacque (R-De Pere) that was signed into law today. The legislation received broad bi-partisan support and was co-authored by State Rep. Paul Tittl.

“For the poor, eyeglasses can often be inaccessible, unaffordable or both, causing both social and economic challenges to learning, public safety and work opportunities,” Sen. Jacque said. “However, state law placed barriers that hampered charitable efforts to provide previously-owned eyeglasses to those in need in our communities, including domestic violence shelters and the homeless.”

Sen. Jacque said that every year the Lions Club processes over 800,000 pairs of eyeglasses. At their facility, these glasses are sorted, cleaned, categorized, bagged, and boxed in preparation for shipment all over the world. Over 450,000 pairs ship annually to 49 developing countries.

“Prior law lacked vision, potentially holding nonprofit organizations like the Lions Club liable for processing and distributing previously owned eyeglasses that later cause harm to users,” Sen. Jacque said. “This initiative helps, rather than hinders, the efforts of these charitable groups that take great care to give the gift of sight to the poor.”

Sen. Jacque said the new law ([Senate Bill 535](#)) creates an exemption from liability for these organizations under the following circumstances:

- The recipient of the eyeglasses is at least 14 years old, and
- The eyeglasses are provided free of charge by the nonprofit organization, and
- The optometrist or ophthalmologist working for the nonprofit organization has either:
 - 1) Personally examined the person in need of the previously owned eyeglasses and issued a prescription for said eyeglasses.
 - 2) Personally consulted with a licensed optometrist or ophthalmologist who does not work for the nonprofit organization who issued the prescription.

Wisconsin now joins three other states (Alaska, Arizona, and Oregon) that have enacted this common sense Good Samaritan protection to allow for distribution within their state borders.

“This legislation strikes the proper balance to help charitable organizations focus on their important mission,” Sen. Jacque said. The legislation is supported by Beyond Vision, the Wisconsin Optometric Association, the Wisconsin Academy of Ophthalmology, and the Wisconsin Civil Justice Council.”