



# MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

*Expanding Opportunity and Unleashing Potential*

850 Hungerford Drive ♦ Room 123 ♦ Rockville, Maryland 20850

**BILL:** HB1375  
**TITLE:** Public School Students - Vision Services and the Vision for Maryland Program  
**DATE:** 3/6/2020  
**POSITION:** OPPOSE  
**COMMITTEE:** Ways and Means  
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The Montgomery County Board of Education (Board) **opposes** HB1375.

This bill calls for the development of a “health specialist” who will have among their responsibilities to oversee vision screenings across all school settings, collect, track and analyze data about followup, provide guidance and printed information to parents/guardians, and facilitate the provision of an eye exam (potentially onsite at the school) and glasses, as needed.

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Regulation JPA-RB, Safety and Screening Problems: Lead, Hearing, and Vision currently mandates that MCPS provide vision screening to: all students ages 3 through 5 during the special education screening process; upon entering MCPS; entering Grade 1, and again in Grade 8 or 9. In addition, students referred with symptoms of vision problems also are screened.

References to “vision services” and “vision rehabilitation” appear to be a veiled reference to “vision therapy” which is not an educational service but rather a medical service that is provided by an optometrist in an office. It highlights the provision of “vision services” as “determined by the results of an eye examination” which is not in accordance with guidelines under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or 504 where a physical condition has to be considered in the impact to accessing instruction.

The impact to MCPS and the Vision Program will be reflected in the continued increase in consideration of external reports for “convergence insufficiency” or “binocular disorder” which typically includes a report review and write-up, classroom observation, consultation with staff, and participation in Child Find or 504 meetings. Currently, the Vision Program receives on average two referrals per week for this area of parent/guardian concern. While access to additional vision screening and support for follow-up would be of benefit to students and families, this bill goes beyond that in scope and intent.

Additional note: although there is a reference to “hearing screening” and “hearing aids” this bill does not appear to address similar needs related to students who do not pass their hearing screening but have no internal support for follow up.

For these reasons, the Board **opposes** this legislation and urges an unfavorable report.