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**Testimony of Catherine Carter**  
**FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**  
**HB1271: Student Evaluation-Identification of Traumatic Brain Injury**  
**Wednesday, February 17, 2021**

My name is Catherine Carter. I am a vision advocate who works on policy and legislative change to improve identification and access to vision care. I am also Project Manager of the Howard County "Beyond 20/20" Program is a collaborative public and private partnership that is working to bring awareness and needed eye care services to underserved/uninsured Howard County Public School System ("HCPSS") students. Distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today in favor with amendments to HB1271 to screen not just for traumatic brain injury TBI but for behavioral health in the special education process.

We need to not just screen for TBI but also other behavioral health issues such as vision, hearing, mental health, etc. that could potentially be impacting a student who is struggling. I am asking the bill could be amended to a general behavioral health questionnaire (that includes the TBI questions and vision, etc.), similar to what I answered when I enrolled my child in the Child Find program for IEP services. They actually ask if there is a history of eye problems in the current HCPSS Child Find form, though without an eye exam the parent may not know. I am surprised schools only do a behavioral health parent questionnaire and screening in the Child Find because many kids are referred after they enter school and a child's health can change at anytime. **I have attached the Child Find form from HCPSS that I fill out.**

If a struggling student is flagged and then gets the medical treatment they need from the right medical professional, they will do better in life and school.

**Behavioral Health Screening Parent Questionnaire:**

- Sent to parents/guardians upon first referral at the IEP 1: with the 1st parent invite from the school for a struggling student referred to an IEP in preparation for the meeting
- Sent to parents/guardians at the Tri-annual IEP Re-evaluation attached to the report that gets sent home to parents in preparation for the meeting
- Extend its usage beyond Child Find to K12
- Include questions on TBI and vision/hearing and have seen an optometrist/ophthalmologist within the last year
- *Included a question for the parent to indicate a need for behavioral health resources for their student*
- *If yes then allow the parent to grant permission for the school Behavioral Health Coordinator to contact the parent (created by the Blueprint) (may want to include a definition for parents or informational flyer when parents indicate need)*
- Task the Behavioral Health Consortium to create the standards for the questionnaire to help ensure seamless data collection on need

**Behavioral Health Coordinator:**

Many teachers and school staff do not feel comfortable flagging behavioral health needs. Many teachers would just refer for an IEP or educational intervention when medical may be needed. Talking to special ed teachers, screening and addressing their students' health would make a significant difference. This information can be used to help connect families in need to the Behavioral Health coordinators at the school and health department that the Blueprint Behavioral Health Consortium will establish. Schools already do this, have a form, and with a few additions can make the Behavioral Health part of the Blueprint work better at connecting students to resources and gathering data on need. Also this amended bill can educate the school staff and parents about this new amazing resource the Blueprint is providing.

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