



Maryland Senate

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Budget and Taxation Committee

Maryland House of Delegates

Appropriations Committee
Ways and Means Committee

Re: SB 1000/HB 1300: Blueprint for Maryland’s Future-Implementation Position: Support with Amendments

Too Many Maryland Students Can’t See or Hear to Learn

For decades Maryland has been doing school vision and hearing screenings. However, **70% of students do not report getting the recommended eye exam and 80% of students do not report getting the recommended hearing exam.** This chart is the only screening results that MSDE was able to produce in 2018. There are many barriers to care. A major one is **ZERO of the 155 Federally Qualified Health Clinics in Maryland provide eye exams/glasses.**

Updated School Health Screening Statistics for Vision and Hearing Screening
January 31, 2018

School Year	Vision Data					Hearing Data				
	#Screened	# Referred	%	#follow Up	%	#Screened	# Referred	%	#follow Up	%
2016-2017	289,666	42,812	14.8%	13,196	30.8%	268,402	8,862	3.3%	1,902	21.5%
2015-2016	301,933	38,764	12.8%	13,488	34.8%	294,306	8,717	3.0%	2,145	24.6%
2014-2015	284,727	29,477	10.4%	12,039	40.8%	277,551	6,253	2.3%	2,388	38.2%
2013-2014	280,103	35,829	12.8%	13,951	38.9%	246,128	8,270	3.4%	2,997	36.2%
2012-2013	268,858	35,361	13.2%	14,674	41.5%	264,583	7,549	2.9%	3,258	43.2%
2011-2012	272,898	35,495	13.0%	14,700	41.4%	262,430	7,803	3.0%	3,167	40.6%
2010-2011	229,459	29,643	12.9%	11,930	40.2%	217,321	6,944	3.2%	3,000	43.2%

SB1000/HB1300 Does Not Address Student Vision and Hearing Needs

There are only two words dedicated to vision care as a recommended wrap around service on Page 31 Line 18. There are ZERO words for auditory care. Vision screenings miss up to 75% of vision disorders and screenings are only mandated three times--entry to school, 1st, and 8/9th grade. Vision and hearing impairment can occur at any time. There is no teacher training on signs and symptoms of vision and hearing disorders to help catch students being missed. In the Beyond 20/20 Outreach Program, staff training has been cost-effectively identifying students in need in schools through Howard County.

Solutions:

PASS HB 1375: Establishing certain health specialist position in the State Department of Education and the Maryland Department of Health who will:

- develop infrastructure for and collect, analyze, & respond to data trends concerning student health services
- ensure that students receive necessary vision, auditory examinations, eyeglasses, and hearing aids
- ensure that quality and effective school health services are delivered throughout the state

ADD school personnel training on vision and hearing signs and symptoms on page 89 after Line 22:

(6) RECOGNIZE STUDENT VISION AND HEARING HEALTH ISSUES;

Eye/Ear Health Instruction K, 2, 4th Grade

Students will know how to:

- Recognize when there is a problem with their vision and/or hearing
- Access help when needed
- Protect their eyes and ears

Teacher Reporting Procedures

A formal procedure developed for teachers to report if their students are trying to access help for a possibly eyes/ears health issue.

For many struggling students, the answer may be as simple as a pair of glasses

Baltimore City created partnerships to provide eye exams and glasses to students. Doctor Leana Wen, former Health Commissioner at the Baltimore City Department of Health states, “25 percent of our schoolchildren needed glasses, but were not getting them. That’s estimated to be 15,000 to 20,000 of our kids who’ll end up having to look at the blackboard, and it’s blurry, and they don’t know why, and think that it’s normal.”¹

Vision for Baltimore (2016-2019)

- 5,000 glasses and counting
- 11,768 out of 35,078 students screened failed a basic vision screening
- 6,041 got an eye exam / 4,734 glasses given / 5,727 students still need an eye exam

14% of Students have Hearing Loss

“According to the Centers for Disease and Control, 1.3 out of 1000 8-year-olds have bilateral hearing loss (loss of hearing in both ears) of 40 decibels (dB) or more. And 14.9 percent of children between the ages of 6 and 19 have hearing loss of at least 16 dB in one or both ears. Even hearing loss in only one ear has a tremendous impact on school performance; research shows anywhere from 25 to 35 percent of children with unilateral hearing loss are at risk of failing at least one grade level.” (Healthy Hearing)

Whole School Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model

Adding eye/ear health instruction enables Maryland schools to align with the Whole School Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model, which “includes, integration and collaboration between education leaders and health sectors to improve each child’s cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development. Public health and education serve the same children, often in the same settings...focuses on the child to align the common goals of both sectors to put into action a whole child approach to education...Establishing healthy behaviors during childhood is easier and more effective than trying to change unhealthy behaviors during adulthood. Schools play a critical role in promoting the health and safety of young people and helping them establish lifelong healthy behaviors.” (Centers for Disease Control)

Education Lost if We Fail to Act

Many children do not know that their vision or hearing is not normal. They may go years of needlessly struggling to see the board, read their classwork, or hear their teacher due to undiagnosed impairments. Undiagnosed vision/hearing impairment has a significant impact on a student’s cognitive, physical, social and emotional development. The weeks, months, years that go by that a child can’t see or hear means whole segments of loss in learning. Eyeglasses and a hearing aid will enable a child to immediately see and hear, but the education lost due to our failure to remove the barriers to vision and auditory care will take more time and resources. Pass HB1375 and make sure school staff are trained on signs and symptoms to give every child their best chance at success.

¹ <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/08/17/how-free-eyeglasses-are-boosting-test-scores-in-baltimore-215501>