

HB1233 Testimony of Support from BCPL.pdf

Uploaded by: Bernie Marczyk

Position: FAV



March 4th, 2022

**Testimony of Conni Strittmatter, Youth & Family Engagement Manager
Baltimore County Public Library**

HB 1233

Public Schools – Health and Vision Services – Required Screenings and Eye Examinations

Dear Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Conni Strittmatter – I am the Youth & Family Engagement Manager for Baltimore County Public Library. During my time in this position, I have worked closely with the organization Vision to Learn to offer eye exams for children throughout our county during the summer so they can enter school in the fall prepared to learn and succeed. Since 2018, our partnership has allowed us to provide 413 children with an eye exam, and 243 of them with prescription glasses. We know there are far more in our community and throughout Maryland who are in need – we receive calls throughout the school year asking when we will have this service again.

We know that vision is a crucial component to a child’s education. Without proper vision care, a child will fall behind quickly at school and develop other behavioral and educational needs because of it.

I, and Baltimore County Public Library, wholeheartedly support HB 1233 *Public Schools – Health and Vision Services – Required Screening and Eye Examinations*. This bill would create additional structures to identify the children who need an eye exam, and would provide the needed resources for an organization like Vision to Learn to provide eye exams in times of need.

Thank you for taking my views on this bill into consideration.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Conni Strittmatter', is written over a horizontal line.

Conni Strittmatter
Youth & Family Engagement Manager
Baltimore County Public Library
320 York Rd
Baltimore, MD 21204

HB1233_Catherine Carter LTSC Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Catherine Carter

Position: FAV



HB1233: Health and Vision Services – Required Screenings and Eye Examinations **Creating a more cost-efficient vision screening system**

My name is Catherine Carter. I am a vision and student behavioral health advocate who works on policy and legislative change to improve identification of behavioral health needs and access to healthcare. I am also Project Manager of the [Howard County “Beyond 20/20” Program](#). Since 2017, I have been advocating to fix the screening system that failed to identify my son Atticus’ double vision and allows too many Maryland students to needless struggle because they lack access to vision care. I am asking for a favorable vote for HB1233 to create a more cost-effective vision screening system for our students so they can see to learn.

School year	Vision Data					Hearing Data				
	#Screened	#Referred	%	#followup	%	#Screened	#Referred	%	#followup	%
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%

Current Mass Screening System:

- Screening entry to school (usually kindergarten), first grade, 8th/9th grade
 - This is a significant gap in screenings
 - Missing the critical grade when most students develop common vision impairments like myopia that screenings can catch.
 - My daughter Belleadora has significant myopia. She can’t see hardly anything without her glasses, which include bifocals. We are glad we caught early enough to prevent it from getting worse.
 - “People with myopia can have difficulty clearly seeing a movie or TV screen, a whiteboard in school or while driving. Generally, myopia first occurs in [school-age children](#). Because the eye continues to grow during childhood, it typically progresses until about age 20.” ([AOA](#)).
- Atticus Act information given to parents at screening
 - Screening not an eye exam
 - Signs and symptoms and at-risk groups for vision disorders
 - Vision care resources
- Only reporting on average a 34% eye exam follow up for over 35K students who fail a screening

Significant cost for current system that reports on average only 34% eye exam follow up:

- **Special education teams are using outdated, limited vision screenings when identifying disabilities**
 - [Ohio study](#) found that “out of the 179 that required treatment, 124 (69%) of the children with IEPs would have passed the school vision screening test. That is to say, nearly 70% of those children with an IEP were identified with treatable vision problems and yet would pass the vision screening because their vision problem did not affect their distant eyesight”
- **Cost burden for county health departments = \$5,019,079**
 - Currently school nurses can’t verify which students have had an eye exam within the last year, and in many cases refer all students even
 - **\$250,000** = Baltimore City Health Dept. three screeners and office staff for three grades ([Politico](#))
 - **\$300,000 (\$17 per student)** = [Vision for Baltimore](#) screen all students up to 8th grade (#17,614)
 - **\$17 x 289,666 = \$5,019,079 cost burden annually**
- **Cost burden for school nurses follow up calls = \$1,943,667**
 - School nurses call 2x parents/guardians to check for follow up with eye exam

- HCPSS budget on the cost for nurses to make phone calls
 - \$69,972 per nurse who works 7 hrs per day for 180 school days = \$55.53 per hour
 - 2 phone calls take 30 minutes total to call parent = \$27.78.
 - Annually over 35,000 students fail a screening = 70,000 phone calls.
 - Annual cost = \$1,943,667 per year just in administrative cost

Screening Cost	Eye exam & glasses	# of students get actual vision care
\$250,000 Baltimore City Health Dept.	\$117-150	#2,136 - 1,666
\$1,943,667 nurses	\$117-150	#16,612 - 12,958
\$5,019,079 state-wide	\$117-150	#43,898 - 33,461

Create a more Targeted, Efficient School Vision Screening System

• Parent pre-screening at registration

- Reduce number of new students screened
- Atticus Act information given so parents can pre-screen their child for at-risk groups & signs and symptoms
- Eye exam form parents can use, similar to the [dental exam forms](#) already sent home
- List of participating providers with the Pediatric Vision Program who can input follow up information in the provider portal

• Pediatric Vision Program

- Allow parents to follow up electronically
- Already have state protocol and database systems ([MVA Online Vision Certification Service](#) and [ImmuneNet](#)) in place easing a level of effort toward expansion to include pediatric vision care data.
- Reduce immediate and future county health department and nurse administrative cost
- Reduce number of students needing vision screenings by cross reference students eye exam records (12 months) to determine if student needs an in school vision screening ([Atticus Act 2018](#)).
- Reduce duplicative screening and increase actual care with follow-up eye exams

• Pre-screening by identifying at-risk groups for vision disorders

- **Prevent Blindness strongly believes that some children should be directly referred to an eye care specialist for a comprehensive eye examination rather than undergo a vision screening.**
 - Children with known neurodevelopmental disorders in any area (e.g., hearing impairment, motor abnormalities such as cerebral palsy, cognitive impairment, autism spectrum disorders, speech delay). These children have a higher rate of vision problems than those without neurodevelopmental abnormalities.
- [Massachusetts legislation](#)
 - For children who fail to pass the vision screening and **for children diagnosed with neurodevelopmental delay**, proof of a comprehensive eye examination performed by a licensed optometrist or ophthalmologist chosen by the child's parent or guardian indicating any pertinent diagnosis, treatment, prognosis, recommendation and evidence of follow-up treatment, if necessary, shall be provided.
- **Ohio special ed vision legislation**
 - Within three months after a student identified with disabilities begins receiving services for the first time under an individualized education program, the school district in which that student is enrolled shall require the student to undergo a comprehensive eye examination.

Maryland's children are not receiving the quality vision care they need due to lack of managed care. By using current federal funding to create managed care infrastructure while funding is still available, Maryland can fix a vision screening system that is allowing too many students to fall through the cracks. Last year, I asked the Maryland Health Department to implement administratively the Pediatric Vision Program to mitigate the significant screening cost for the local counties to make up the grades from COVID school shutdown as well as create health infrastructure. The Department did not so now I am asking you as lawmakers to fix a system so there will be no more Atticus's or students sitting in classrooms struggling to learn because they can't see.

LWVMD- HB 1233- Health and Vision Services- Requir

Uploaded by: Nora Miller Smith

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY TO THE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HB 1233: Public Schools- Health and Vision Services- Required Screenings and Eye Examinations

POSITION: Support

BY: Nancy Soreng, President

DATE: March 8, 2022

The League of Women Voters supports **House Bill 1233: Public Schools- Health and Vision Services- Required Screenings and Eye Examinations.**

Per an October 2011 article in the Journal of School Health:
-More than 20% of school-aged youth have some kind of vision problem.... When diagnosed with eye care problems, Black youth living in poverty received fewer and less intensive services. Causal pathways through which vision problems adversely affect academic achievement include sensory perceptions, cognition, and school connectedness. Vision screening is widespread in the nation's schools, but the educational (and public health) benefits from these efforts are jeopardized by lack of follow-up and coordination of efforts.

House Bill 1233 seeks to address this lack of follow-up and coordination of efforts, which adversely affects our children.

Maryland law mandates periodic vision screening tests for all students in public schools upon entry to school, in first grade, and in eighth or ninth grade. If a child fails a screening test, the parents are notified and are advised to arrange for a comprehensive eye exam with a pediatric optometrist or ophthalmologist who participates in the Pediatric Vision program. Only a comprehensive eye exam with a licensed provider can

diagnose a child's visual problem and determine whether glasses or another corrective device is needed.

Students with neurodevelopmental disorders such as Down Syndrome, a family history of eye diseases, or those with medical issues such as diabetes or a history of premature birth are particularly at risk for vision problems.

House Bill 1233 will add another vision screening, for students in third or fourth grade, and will also require that screening be done when an Individualized Education Program or 504 plan is established for a child. The **Vision for Maryland Program** will be created to ensure that all children who need vision support services receive them. It will also act as a central repository of information on students' vision needs, helping coordinate communication and interventions on behalf of the student between the school, parents, and the pediatric optometrist.

The current school vision screening system is not strong and comprehensive enough to benefit all of the Maryland school children who need vision services. **Too many students fail to receive the help they need in order to succeed in school- even if it's a need as fundamental, and simple, as a pair of glasses.** Although the Affordable Care Act considers pediatric vision care an essential health benefit, and thus comprehensive pediatric eye exams are covered, **glasses are not always included as a benefit.**

This is an equity issue. The League of Women Voters believes that equity is an approach based on fairness, which ensures that everyone is given equal opportunity, and that each person has a fair chance to succeed. **It is important that all children in our state receive the vision services they need to succeed.**

The League urges the committee to give a favorable report to HOUSE BILL 1233.

Testimony In Support of HB 1233 - Ways and Means -

Uploaded by: Rich Ceruolo

Position: FAV



March 4, 2022

Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD. 21401

In Support of HB 1233: Public Schools – Health and Vision – Required Screenings and Exams

Members of the Maryland House of Delegates' Ways and Means Committee.

Our 1400 plus membership of families support this bill, and the establishment of standardizing Health and vision screenings in preparing children for success in school.

What a great idea to equity and inclusion for families of children that require the wrap around supports and services included within the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Offering students health and vision screenings needed to fully access their education. Reducing the gaps in vision screenings so that common vision problems can be caught and treated in time to allow the student fair, full and equal access to their education.

We trust that the results of screenings and health information will be provided to families, and automatically trigger certain health services be enacted on behalf of the student(s) and their family.

After the events of the past 2 years, now more than ever, we all need supports and services to help our children be more successful in life as well as in school. Getting back to normal is going to take all of us acting in concert to support our students that need health related support services.

Please return a favorable report on HB 1233 in order to provide services and supports to families all across the state of Maryland. Thank you for your time, and for considering our testimony here today.

Mr. Richard Ceruolo | richceruolo@gmail.com
Parent, Lead Advocate and Director of Public Policy
Parent Advocacy Consortium (Find us on Facebook/Meta)
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ParentAdvocacyConsortium>

HB1233

Uploaded by: Terri Hill

Position: FAV

SUPPORT

HB1233 - Public School Students - Vision Services and the Vision for Maryland Program

March 8, 2022

Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice-chair Washington and Ways and Means Committee Members,

THE BUCK STOPS HERE, or at least it should. That is why HB1233 is introduced.

THE PROBLEM – that many Maryland primary and secondary school children with vision problems never receive the glasses necessary for them to see well enough to read well enough to learn. HB1233 differs from previous legislation before this committee seeking to address it in several ways, and by building on the commitment and foundation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future

HB1233, the work product of a multi-stakeholder groups including ophthalmologists, optometrists representatives of the state school boards, State superintendents, state local public health officers, state and local libraries, vision advocates, and community service organizations would:

- Establish the Vision for Maryland program to provide vision exams and prescribed glasses for students who have fallen through the cracks and connect them with local providers and resources for ongoing and long-term follow-up and management;
- Establish the Pediatric Vision Program, modeled on voluntary reporting of eye exam results to the Maryland Motor Vehicle Association, to facilitate reporting of eye exam findings and identify students and families in need of direction and support to get the needed vision aids;
- Add additional vision screenings for students in public schools;
- Standardize base on local jurisdiction best practices the information shared with families regarding vision screenings, vision exams, and resources available for obtaining indicated exams and glasses;
- Modify the school registration and intake health forms to better identify students who have requiring a certain health form to include space for certain information;
- Task designees of the Maryland Department of Education and the Maryland Department of Health to collaborate in identifying and partnering throughout the state with local resources, and with the Vision for Baltimore subsidiary of Vision to Learn to expand the current programs that are successfully filling the gaps in vision care so that every jurisdiction will have what they need to ensure that no child needing glass is without a way of receiving them.

With the submitted amendment, the additional screenings, establishment of the Pediatric Vision Program, and updating school forms would go into effect in 2022 and the establishment of the Vision for Maryland program would be delayed until fall 2024 to give MDE, MDE, Vision for Baltimore, the Maryland Optometric Association and other stakeholders time to do a needs study, determine the best plan to roll out the program so that jurisdictions with the greatest need are prioritized earlier, and coordinate with local school systems, public health departments, providers, and community resources in customizing the program to local needs.

HB12333 mandates a minimal annual appropriation, which will be money well invested, after all you can't expect Johnny (or Janie) to learn if they can't read because they can't properly see. Between 30 and 70% of students who fail vision screenings fail to either get the vision exams to diagnose the problem or the glasses that they need. This is not isolated to a particular socioeconomic level. The reasons vary, and is not always related to family income, but the result is the same. By making sure that the students identified and then shown as needing glasses actually get them, we make a small upstream investment that can lead to huge downstream benefits for the student, the community and our state, at a much lower cost than waiting until than the costs associated with education failures.

I respectfully urge a favorable report.

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HB1233

Uploaded by: Terri Hill

Position: FAV



March 4, 2022

The Honorable Terri L. Hill, M.D.
Member, Maryland House of Delegates
SUBMITTED BY E-MAIL

Re: House Bill 1233

Dear Delegate Hill,

Thank you for your continued advocacy for policies and programs that would improve access to vision care for children and young people in Maryland. At Vision To Learn, a non-profit organization working to help students across the country get the glasses they need to succeed in school, our mission aligns closely with this goal. Since 2012, Vision To Learn has provided no-cost vision screenings, eye exams and glasses directly to K-12 students in 14 states and the District of Columbia. Our program utilizes mobile vision clinics that travel to school sites and community organizations, bringing help directly to kids who need it. As the program continues to grow, we are committed to utilizing best practices and evidence-based research to inform our protocols for vision screenings, eye exams, prescribing glasses, and connecting children to local eye care providers for further evaluation, when needed.

Since 2016, Vision To Learn has partnered with Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore City Health Department, Baltimore City Public Schools, and Warby Parker to provide services at City Schools as “Vision for Baltimore.” To-date the program has provided over 64,000 vision screenings, 14,000 eye exams and 9,900 glasses to K-8 students in Baltimore. This work has been supported by many generous local and national sponsors, including the Abell Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and The Aaron and Lillie Straus Foundation. Recognizing the importance of building a sustainable funding stream, beyond philanthropy, to sustain the program, we also bill Medicaid for covered services and receive claims reimbursement, when available.

Vision To Learn supports House Bill 1233 with amendments. House Bill 1233 would expand data collection, vision screenings, and follow-up eye care for students in need. Seeing clearly at school is critical to student achievement – an estimated 80% of learning is visual. Approximately 1 in 4 students need glasses to clearly see the board or read a book, but in underserved communities a large majority of students in need go without.

Free Glasses for Kids

12100 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 1275, Los Angeles, CA 90025 (800) 485-9196 VisionToLearn.org

Vision To Learn is a nonprofit, tax-exempt public charity under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

School-based vision screenings are an important tool for identifying students in need of glasses or more serious vision care, but without additional assistance many families are unable to provide the recommended eye exams and glasses for their children. In the past seven years, Vision for Baltimore has provided a national model for how school-based providers can partner with schools in serving students who have failed vision screenings, ensuring students get the eye exams and glasses they need.

The benefits are clear: a study of the Vision for Baltimore program published recently in the JAMA Ophthalmology journal found that students provided glasses made greater improvements in English Language Arts and mathematics standardized tests, equivalent to adding two to four months of additional learning during the school year. School-based vision programs not only provide health access, but also help to address gaps in academic achievement. A pair of glasses is the most cost-effective educational tool we can provide to our students.

HB 1233 would bring Maryland closer to a comprehensive school vision health policy where no student is left behind. It would add a year of mandated student vision screening in the 3rd or 4th grade, filling in a 7-year gap in vision screening between the currently mandated 1st and 8th grade screenings. The bill would gather data to assess whether referred students are receiving necessary eye exams and glasses, and share information with parents about accessible optometrists and ophthalmologists in their community.

HB 1233 would establish a Pediatric Vision Program in the Department of Health, charged with compiling and making accessible data regarding student vision care. It further would establish a Vision for Maryland program, which would expand vision support services for students going without eye care in the state. And, it would allocate funding to support this expansion in annual phases.

Vision To Learn is named in HB 1233 as the proposed administrator of the Vision for Maryland program. We believe that for such a program to succeed, it will take the combined efforts and input of a wide range of stakeholders, including county boards of education, local health departments, the Maryland Optometric Association, the Maryland Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons, and our partner organizations at Vision for Baltimore. Recognizing that there are different needs, capacity, and resources in the 24 school districts across Maryland, we recommend convening these stakeholders and others to conduct a needs analysis and feasibility study before formally launching a state-wide Vision for Maryland program. The recommendations of this effort could then be used to guide the structure, timing and strategy of expanding vision service access to students across the state.

Vision To Learn recommends that funding and a plan for such a needs analysis be added to HB 1233. This needs analysis should include an understanding of 1) state and local vision screening requirements and practices, 2) local organizations and providers that currently offer screenings, eye exams, or eyeglasses, both in the community and school setting, 3) current efforts by health departments and boards of education to connect students with vision care after a failed vision screening, including data on rates of

successfully receiving an eye exam, 4) barriers that children and their families currently encounter when connecting with eye care, and 5) data on the number of uninsured or underinsured children in the community.

We share your urgency for expanding vision care access in Maryland. Every year that passes with a student unable to see at school holds back their academic progress. Nevertheless, Vision To Learn believes that a statewide planning process is a necessary next step to establish an effective, comprehensive, and sustainable student vision care network in the state. We look forward to working with Maryland stakeholders to help bring the goals in HB 1233 to fruition.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ann Hollister". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Ann Hollister
President, Vision To Learn

HB1233-WM_MACo_SWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Brianna January

Position: FWA



House Bill 1233

Public Schools - Health and Vision Services - Required Screenings and Eye Examinations

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Ways and Means Committee

WITH AMENDMENTS

Date: March 8, 2022

From: Brianna January

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS HB 1233 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill would establish a statewide Vision for Maryland Program, implement pilot programs in local jurisdictions, increase the required number of vision screenings from 3 to 4, and would ultimately place the onus on school systems to ensure all public school students who fail screenings receive full vision exams and glasses if prescribed.

Counties and local education agencies understand the critical importance of healthy vision in the success of our students, and counties have been engaged on various iterations of this bill for a long time and welcome further collaboration on it.

That said, HB 1233 would benefit from amendments to address some county concerns, including uncertainty on the match between state resources and actual costs to implement the abundant goals of the bill. Amendments that could address some of these concerns include the following:

- **Shifting the Vision for Maryland Program and accompanying \$2 million in state funding to a statewide pilot program with a required study** to see if the programming and its funding are sufficient to address statewide need, with special emphasis on estimating the impact on the local school systems and potential costs of providing eye exams and glasses. Additionally, the study amendments should also include **evaluating options for how the State can leverage its economy of scale to buy glasses and other vision accessories at potentially reduced cost**.
- **Clarifying that the Vision for Maryland Program and accompanying \$2 million in state funding is supporting operational and fiscal needs of the existing (and under HB 1233, expanded) vision screening requirements for all public school students in the state.**

Counties welcome the opportunity to work with the Committee on these suggested amendments to better align the bill's goals with the realities and needs of the local jurisdictions and school systems who would be bound to carry out the bill's charges. For those reasons, MACo **SUPPORTS HB 1233 WITH AMENDMENTS**.

HB1233_FWA_MSEPS_Pub. Schools - Vision Serv. - Req

Uploaded by: Danna Kauffman

Position: FWA



TO: The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbary, Chair
Members, House Ways and Means Committee
The Honorable Terri L. Hill

FROM: Danna L. Kauffman
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise

DATE: March 8, 2022

RE: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT** –House Bill 1233 – *Public Schools – Health and Vision Services – Required Screenings and Eye Examinations*

The Maryland Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons (MSEPS) is the professional organization of medical doctors who practice ophthalmology in the State of Maryland. Maryland is a world-renowned center for the training of ophthalmologists including the Wilmer Eye Institute at Johns Hopkins University. MSEPS **supports with amendments** House Bill 1233.

MSEPS thanks the sponsor for her commitment to eye care in Maryland. As indicated below, MSEPS does support the following proposals contained in the legislation:

- Creation of a student health form that includes a place to describe any health issue, including vision issues, that may adversely affect academic performance.
- The proposed expansion of vision screening to an additional grade above and beyond the current state mandate of first entry to school, first grade and eighth or ninth grade. Conducting vision screenings in an interim year of 3rd or 4th grade is important to close the present 7-year gap between vision screenings in the present law.

However, while MSEPS supports increasing access to eye screenings and vision services through the positions above, we remain concerned regarding several provisions in the bill and request that they be removed from the bill.

- Requiring vision screenings for students with individualized education plans (IEP) may not be enough; many of these children need a complete eye exam with an optometrist or ophthalmologist skilled in the examination of children.
- While MSEPS supports comprehensive eye exams and treatment for children who fail a vision screening, it is likely beyond the scope of any county board to “ensure” that students receive eye exams and treatment.
- MSEPS does not support a baseline eye exam before school entry for all students. Instead we support comprehensive eye exams for children who fail the vision screening. Efforts should be focused on these children who have failed the screening and on increasing the frequency of vision screenings

throughout childhood. County boards and health departments should not be tasked with keeping up to date lists of optometrists and ophthalmologists.

- While we agree with the benefit of increasing communication between ophthalmologists/optometrists and school staff, a central repository for health information is resource intensive and should be removed from the bill. We do, however, support establishing a repository for results of vision screenings and eye exams to be able to track the rate of follow up care obtained by children who fail vision screenings.
- MSEPS supports addressing unmet needs for pediatric eye care in Maryland. However, the creation of a Vision for Maryland program would likely apply vast resources to areas of the State where these needs do not exist. Rather, the State should support work to properly assess the best ways to address the pediatric eye care needs in the State. Therefore, this section should be removed.

Therefore, we urge the Committee to take into account the issues raised above when considering House Bill 1233. Thank you.

For more information call:

Danna L. Kauffman

Pamela Metz Kasemeyer

J. Steven Wise

410-244-7000

HB1233 Testimony-MOA.pdf

Uploaded by: Jennifer Cohen

Position: FWA

March 4, 2022

The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chairman
House Ways & Means Committee
131 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Testimony in Support with Amendments for House Bill 1233 “Public Schools - Health and Vision Services - Required Screenings and Eye Examinations”

Dear Chairman & Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Optometric Association (MOA) submits this testimony in support of House Bill 1233 entitled, “Public Schools - Health and Vision Services - Required Screenings and Eye Examinations” (HB 1233) with amendments. Specifically, MOA recommends amendments to 1) require that ALL students being assessed for, or receiving services under an IEP receive an eye examination, and 2) strike the proposed new addition of Education Article Section 7-404.2 in its entirety (p 8, line 11 through p 9 line 15)

MOA is a 501 (c) 6 non-profit trade association representing hundreds of member optometrists practicing in almost every jurisdiction in the State. As Maryland’s family eye doctors, doctors of optometry know the importance of ensuring all children receive proper eye and vision care. Children are at risk for a wide range of eye and vision disorders, but regular comprehensive eye examinations conducted by an eye care provider (optometrist or ophthalmologist) both annually and at key developmental milestones in a child’s life can improve detection, diagnosis, and early prevention or treatment of eye conditions. Failure to address significant eye and vision conditions early may have long-term consequences not only on eye health but also on educational attainment, professional opportunities and quality of life.

A growing number of states have enacted laws in recent years that require children to have a comprehensive eye exam before entering the school system. The MOA strongly supports these efforts, which not only ensure children begin their academic experience with healthy eyes and good vision, but also save the State considerable human and financial resources. Although HB 1233 does not include this mandate, it does contain several provisions that would help identify children living and learning with an undetected vision condition to connect them with an eye care provider to receive needed eye health services.

There are many visual conditions that can impact a child’s ability to read, write, spell or perform math computations. Approximately 80% of learning comes through the visual system. When assessing a child’s overall health for learning difficulties, it is critical that the student receive a comprehensive eye exam by an eye care provider (optometrist or ophthalmologist) to accurately determine whether the child has a vision disorder or refractive error. For this reason, MOA supports HB 1233 with the amendments referenced above. The reason for the recommended amendments is as follows:

Amendment 1: ***Require that ALL students being assessed for, or receiving services under an IEP receive an eye examination*** Vision screenings performed by school nurses regularly miss vision conditions. Requiring this student population at high risk for vision problems to fail a screening as a condition of the County ensuring

the student receive an eye exam is a disservice to the child and further burdens the State's already overwhelmed school-based health system. Vision screenings (vs. an eye exam) for this student population are insufficient and come at great cost to the State and individual County school systems.

Amendment 2: **Strike the proposed new addition of Education Article Section 7-404.2 in its entirety** (p 8, line 11 through p 9 line 15). While MOA strongly supports the creation of the Maryland Pediatric Vision Program under the proposed new section to the Education Article 7404.1, we do not support Section 7-404.2, which creates the Vision for Maryland Program, designating \$2 million annually to the expansion of one specific existing program, Vision to Learn. The section, which serves only one of many NGOs that are capable and willing to provide vision care services, greatly compromises continuity of care for student patients that will require a lifetime vision care. MOA recognizes the need for programs like Vision to learn and those provided by other NGO entities and charities for uninsured children without the means to obtain needed vision and eye health services. However, insured students with private or State insurance must be encouraged to find a primary eye care provider (optometrist or ophthalmologist) who take care of their vision health needs not only at the initial visit, but annually as they grow, undergoing additional vision changes throughout their adolescence into adulthood. Vision to Learn, and likeminded programs, provide a valuable service to children in need, but they cannot not address follow up issues that arise for most patients, leaving them without a provider to care for them in the future.

MOA commends the bill sponsor for bringing together a well-rounded stakeholder group of healthcare professionals, educators, administrators and child advocates to improve both the identification and assessment process for children with vision conditions impacting their ability to learn to ensure these children receive needed vision care. For the reasons stated herein, the Maryland Optometric Association urges this Committee to vote favorably on House Bill 1233 with the aforementioned amendments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Whitney Fahrman, O.D." The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of a vertical line.

Whitney Fahrman, O.D.
MOA President

HB 1233.Required Eye Examinations.pdf

Uploaded by: John Woolums

Position: FWA

BILL: House Bill 1233
TITLE: Public Schools - Health and Vision Services - Required Screenings and Eye Examinations
DATE: March 8, 2022
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports House Bill 1233 regarding the establishment of the Vision for Maryland Program. MABE notes that any mandated expansion of the annual vision screening impacts both local school systems and county health departments, both of which are required to provide vision screenings to students as specified in the law. MABE also notes that a prior version of this bill would have placed the Vision for Maryland Program within the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) rather than the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

Local boards of education support and promote policies intended to ensure the highest level of student health and safety. Therefore, MABE supports this bill's proposal to establish the Vision for Maryland Program to provide enhanced and more equitable access to eye examinations and eyeglasses for public school students. In addition, House Bill 1233 would establish the Pediatric Vision Program within MSDE as a central repository of eye examination results. The repository would be developed by MSDE and MDH.

Under this bill, MSDE would be required to administer the Vision for Maryland Program to provide eye examinations to students who fail the required vision screening and eyeglasses if determined necessary by the examination. MABE supports maintaining the current law, under §7-404 of the Education Article, which requires student hearing and vision screenings. For many years the requirements were for grades four, five, or six and grade nine. More recently these requirements were updated to require vision screenings upon entering school, in grade one, and grade eight or nine. If, as proposed in this bill, the mandated annual vision screenings are expanded to include either third or fourth grade, the costs for doing so would be imposed on local school systems or local health departments, depending on the locally developed program. MABE requests an amendment to specify that state funding would be provided to support any mandated expansion of vision screening. Similarly, MABE requests amendments to remove the provisions of the bill mandating individual vision screening based on student behaviors.

MABE supports a statewide approach to vision screening that ensures the timely assessment and of each student's hearing and vision health condition. Therefore, MABE appreciates the bill's approach to mandating state funding to ensure that the administration and costs to support the new state programs proposed under this bill. However, given that the costs of administering the required vision screenings are the responsibility of school systems and local governments, MABE must also highlight the equity issues arising from expanding the scope of the mandated services without sufficient state funding. This bill would not only expand the number of mandated vision screenings, it would also require school systems to "ensure" that a student receives the recommended eyeglasses. As laudable as this goal is, it must be supported by state resources to ensure equity for each student and family.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 1233 with the amendments described above.

Letter for testimony HB1233_Vision Impact Institut

Uploaded by: Judith Williams

Position: FWA

HOUSE BILL

HB1233

**Public Schools – Health and Vision Services – Required Screenings and Eye 3
Examinations**

Sponsor: Delegate Hill

WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HEARING DATE: MARCH 8, 2022

TESTIMONY BY:

VISION IMPACT INSTITUTE

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMMENDMENTS

Contact information:

Judith Williams

judith.williams@visionimpactinstitute.org



March 4, 2022



Re: HB1233 – Health and Vision Services – Required Screenings and Eye Examinations

The [Vision Impact Institute](#) is a global **non-profit** organization that raises awareness about the importance of vision correction and protection to make good vision a global priority. Through the U.S. [Kids See: Success Initiative](#) we advocate for children to receive vision examinations before entering school and throughout their school years of development. Since **80% of all learning** is acquired through the eyes, **vision problems directly affect children’s learning and have additional socio-economic effects.**

The proposed bill will be a step forward into the path of a comprehensive children’s vision legislation in Maryland, **when taking into consideration the following:**

7–404 (B) (I) - adding school vision screenings in 3rd or 4th grade

- Additional vision screenings requirements at other grade levels will help reduce the gap in helping Maryland students to receive more adequate vision care needed to succeed in the classroom at critical milestones in their development.
- This is particularly true today, since during the recent COVID-19 pandemic school-based vision screenings **were halted** while children were more than ever exposing their eyes to **increased screen time** and at potentially higher risk to damage their vision, or being undiagnosed.

7–404 (C) Eye Examination for IEP Program vs. Vision screenings

- Approximately **60% of “problem learners”** are believed to suffer from undetected or untreated visual problems. Some studies have found that as many as 40% of students diagnosed with a learning disability actually have a vision issue, not a learning disability. *Gross, Kristan, Success in School Tied to Healthy Vision: What Educators Need to Know. NJEA Review, February 2018.*
- Therefore, provision 7–404 (C) must ensure every student in elementary or secondary school **prior being considered for entry** into Section 504, Title I Reading or **Individualized Education Program** are referred directly to receive a **complete and thorough eye health examination and not a vision screening.** In fact, the **National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine** recommendation is for comprehensive eye exams as the **“gold standard”** to detect vision disorders in children, which are fundamentally different from a school vision screenings.

- A proper eye health examination will also avoid costly misdiagnosed cases for school districts and children wrongly placed in special education programs.

7-404.1 Pediatric Vision Program

- Current and future school vision screening requirements and guidelines must require a **stronger follow-up referral system that would ensure that children who fail the school screening receive an eye examination by an eye care provider** and receive intervention (eyeglasses) when needed and/or appropriate support recommendations for the classroom.
- The **National Eye Institute** at NIH recognizes that **30% of children** with eye or vision problems are missed using even the most advanced vision-screening technologies. Therefore, disorders such as strabismus, amblyopia, and significant refractive error in children can be undiagnosed, which may result in late detection of vision disorders or potential vision loss.
- A **stronger follow up system and guidelines** in school vision screenings ensures the collection of data from concerning the results of the original screenings, referral outcomes, and better coordination so that children with potential vision problems will receive an adequate evaluation and early intervention.

7-404.2 Vision for Maryland Program

- The bill should promote the utilization of programs that are already in place such as the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act, programs that provide coverage for children's eye examinations and promote continuity of care **at no added cost**.
- Eye exams and eyeglasses are provided at no cost to **underserved children and families** by many philanthropic organization programs. Student parents or guardians shall be provided with a list of all organizations offering such programs.
- A broader and more coordinated program including all organizations providing no cost/low cost vision care outreach services should be considered when expanding vision support services for public school students in Maryland.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony that will improve the quality of children's vision and their academic performance in the classroom.

Sincerely,



Kristan Gross

Global Executive Director Vision

Impact Institute

www.visionimpactinstitute.org

HB1233 Vision Screening 3.8.22.pdf

Uploaded by: Jeanette Ortiz

Position: UNF



HB1233 PUBLIC SCHOOLS - HEALTH AND VISION SERVICES - REQUIRED SCREENINGS AND EYE EXAMINATIONS

March 8, 2022

WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

OPPOSE

Jeanette Ortiz, Esq., Legislative & Policy Counsel (410.703.5352)

Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) opposes **HB1233 Public Schools - Health and Vision Services - Required Screenings and Eye Examinations**. This bill alters the requirements for vision screenings for students in public school. The bill establishes the Pediatric Vision Program and the Vision for Maryland Program to expand vision support services. It requires a county board of education to ensure that certain students receive an eye examination and eyeglasses under certain circumstances and in coordination with the aforementioned programs, if necessary. The bill also requires a county board of education or county health department to provide students with specified information when the student registers for school.

This bill establishes the Vision for Maryland program in the Maryland Department of Health to provide eye examinations and eyeglasses to public school students who fail the required vision screening. Additionally, local boards of education and local health departments must provide eye examinations for specified students. The bill also creates a health specialist position in both MSDE and the Maryland Department of Health to ensure that quality and effective school health services are delivered throughout the State.

Local school systems or local health departments are already required to provide hearing and vision screenings for all students in local public schools. Student health rooms at AACPS are staffed by personnel from the Anne Arundel County Department of Health, and it is this staff that conducts vision screenings at our schools.

A 2018 law passed by the General Assembly altered the notice requirements related to student hearing and vision screenings and required that notice and specified educational materials be given to parents/guardians for all students receiving hearing and vision screenings. For students who fail the vision screening, additional information must be provided, including 1) notice that the results of the screening indicate that the student may have a vision disorder; and 2) a recommendation that the student be tested by an optometrist or an ophthalmologist.

While this legislation is well-intentioned, it is unnecessary and AACPS has concerns with the requirement that county boards of education coordinate with the Vision for Maryland and Pediatric Vision programs to ensure that students receive eye examinations and, if necessary, eyeglasses. Such a responsibility does not fall on a county board of education. The responsibility to ensure that students receive eyeglasses, when necessary, would be best executed by the Maryland Department of Health or staff with the aforementioned programs as these are the entities who would be responsible for implementing the program as established under this bill.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report on HB1233.

HB1233- Hopkins - LOI.pdf

Uploaded by: Annie Coble

Position: INFO

HB 1233

Letter of Information

TO: The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary, Chair
House Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Annie Coble
Assistant Director, State Affairs, Johns Hopkins University and Medicine

DATE: March 8, 2022

Johns Hopkins would like to offer information that demonstrates the value of vision screening programs in schools, which may be helpful to the Committee in consideration of **HB 1233 Public Schools – Health and Vision Services – Required Screenings and Eye Examinations**. This bill works to expand access to vision care for students across the state. We would like to take this opportunity to highlight the Vision for Baltimore program and the importance of vision screenings, eye exams, and glasses for students who need them.

Johns Hopkins partners, with Baltimore City Public Schools, Baltimore City Health Department, Warby Parker, and Vision To Learn for the Vision for Baltimore (V4B) program. V4B provides vision screenings, eye exams and glasses to Baltimore City students directly in their schools. Currently in its sixth year V4B has conducted vision screenings for more than 64,000 students, over 13,000 eye exams for students who failed vision screenings, and distributed more than 9,700 pairs of eyeglasses.

Vision for Baltimore works through the collaboration of several participating organizations mentioned above. The Baltimore City Health Department technicians conduct a vision screening assessment on all students enrolled in grades preK – 8th at participating schools. The Vision To Learn mobile clinic conducts eye exams for students who fail the vision screening and provide consent. If the optometrist finds that a student needs glasses, they are prescribed and ordered. Students can pick from a variety of Warby Parker frames. Vision To Learn visits each school to distribute the glasses, customized with the student's prescription, and fitted by a trained optician. School staff and V4B staff work together to encourage students to wear their glasses, and track their success. Ongoing program support and school engagement is provided by Johns Hopkins School Vision Advocates.

A groundbreaking study, published September 2021 in *JAMA Ophthalmology* compared test scores and academic progress for student who received eyeglasses through V4B over a 3-year period. The result showed improved test scores in English Language Arts and Math on state i-Ready assessment. There were also large gains for students in special education, students performing in the lowest quartile at baseline. For example, all students gained the equivalent of 2-4 months of additional learning time, and students in the lowest quartile and in special education gained the equivalent of 4-6 months.

In closing, one third of Baltimore students failed a vision screening; V4B successfully connected them with eye exams and glasses directly in their schools. V4B can and should serve as a model to advance health and educational equity for disadvantaged students in school districts across Maryland.

1 - HB 1233 - W&M - MDH - LOI.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: State of Maryland (MD)

Position: INFO



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Dennis R. Schrader, Secretary

March 8, 2022

The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary
Chair, House Ways and Means Committee
Room 131, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: HB 1233 – Public Schools – Health and Vision Services – Required Screenings and Eye Examinations – Letter of Information

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) respectfully submits this letter of information on House Bill (HB) 1233 – Public Schools – Health and Vision Services – Required Screenings and Eye Examinations. HB 1233 alters the number of mandated vision screenings for students, requires a county board of education to ensure that certain students receive an eye examination and eyeglasses, and establishes the Pediatric Vision Program and the Vision for Maryland Program to expand vision support services in schools.

HB 1233 requires that MDH’s primary contact employee for the School-Based Health Centers (SBHC) ensure the implementation and oversight of the Vision for Maryland Program. This program will spread “Vision to Learn” vision support services from Baltimore City to all counties in the State, adding five (5) counties per fiscal year.

Vision and hearing screening in public schools is currently led by MDH’s School Health Services program. School Health Services develops and standardizes guidelines for school nurses, in partnership with the Maryland State Department of Education, and provides leadership and assistance to local health services programs. The School Health Services program is separate from SBHCs. SBHCs are healthcare clinics located at or near schools, and have clinic staff that are employed by a sponsoring agency that operates the clinic. These sponsoring agencies may be federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), local health departments, or other provider practices. While SBHCs may collaborate with school nurses, school nurses are usually part of the local school system, and separate from the SBHC clinic providers.

HB 1233 will increase the volume of vision screenings, eye exams, and glasses reimbursed by Medicaid. MDH requires that all Healthchoice Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) that serve children to offer and promote vision screenings, eye exams, and cover eyeglasses for these children.

To accomplish this goal, these MCOs will be required to bolster their vision-screening programs and be required to reach out to these populations to ensure these screenings are received. Further, for children who have a positive vision screening, the MCO will be required to ensure yearly outreach is continued so the child receives an annual eye exam. These efforts will respond to the critical need of these children to receive vision services that are already covered by Medicaid and its MCOs. MDH estimates the fiscal impact of the bill will be \$5.2 million in total funds per year, with \$2.9 million coming from federal funds and \$2.3 million coming from State general funds.

If you have any questions, please contact Heather Shek, Director of Governmental Affairs, at heather.shek@maryland.gov or (410) 260-3190.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dennis R. Schrader". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Dennis R. Schrader
Secretary