



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

March 8, 2022

WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

OPPOSE

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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.