



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

February 24, 2023

The Honorable Brian Feldman  
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment  
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

### **RE: SB 573 – School Health and Vision Services – Screenings and Eye Examinations – Letter of Concern**

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) is submitting this letter of concern for Senate Bill (SB) 573 - School Health and Vision Services - Screenings and Eye Examinations. SB 573 requires the School-Based Health Center (SBHC) Program to implement and oversee the Vision for Maryland Program that will expand the “Vision to Learn” vision support services to all counties in the State. SB 573 further requires MDH and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to develop a Pediatric Vision Program including a “central repository” to allow exchange of health information between optometrists and ophthalmologists, and school health staff. The bill mandates an eye examination for children prior to school enrollment and vision screening for students in 3rd or 4th grade, and authorizes county boards of education to determine whether certain students should receive an eye examination or glasses.

SB 573 will create a new requirement for children to provide documentation of an eye examination prior to school enrollment. However, there is no evidence to support this requirement. As such, the bill will place an undue burden on families and the health care system and may prevent children from school enrollment. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that pediatric health care providers conduct visual acuity screening at ages 4 and 5 years as well as in cooperative 3 year olds.<sup>1</sup> Children will be referred for a comprehensive eye examination by their pediatric health care provider if they fail screening or there are other concerns.

Furthermore, SB 573 will require county boards of education to decide whether students who fail a vision screening or have signs or symptoms of concern should receive (1) an eye examination, and (2) if recommended by an examining ophthalmologist or optometrist, receive eyeglasses. Currently, if a student fails a school vision screening or has signs or symptoms of concern, the SHS guidelines state that the student should be referred for a comprehensive eye examination by an ophthalmologist or optometrist. These comprehensive eye examinations, completed by licensed medical professionals, are important to ensure the child receives the appropriate eye care

---

<sup>1</sup> Bright Futures and American Academy of Pediatrics. (2022). *Recommendations for Preventive Pediatric Health Care*. [https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/periodicity\\_schedule.pdf?\\_ga=2.152119417.1783973960.1676044506-730577136.1663587180](https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/periodicity_schedule.pdf?_ga=2.152119417.1783973960.1676044506-730577136.1663587180)

to meet their needs. County boards of education include a variety of members who may not be knowledgeable on eye health and care and should not be involved in this decision-making. In addition, county boards of education should not decide on if glasses are necessary, as this health care decision should be made by the student's parent/guardian.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Megan Peters, Acting Director of Governmental Affairs at [megan.peters@maryland.gov](mailto:megan.peters@maryland.gov) or (410) 260-3190.

Sincerely,



Laura Herrera Scott M.D., M.P.H  
Secretary