



Senate Bill 573

School Health and Vision Services – Screenings and Eye Examinations

MACo Position: **SUPPORT WITH
AMENDMENTS**

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee

Date: February 24, 2023

From: Brianna January

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS SB 573 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. Counties have been engaged on various iterations of this bill for a long time and welcome further collaboration on it.

SB 573 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 \$2.5 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 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 \$2.5 million in state funding is supporting operational and fiscal needs of the existing (and under SB 573, 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 SB 573 WITH AMENDMENTS**.