



P.O. Box 350, Stevenson, MD 21153 ♦ T: (410) 486-9662 ♦ F: (443) 378-8845 ♦ [www.marylandoptometry.org](http://www.marylandoptometry.org)

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March 1, 2023

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

**Re: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 388 “Public Schools – Standardized Behavioral Health Questionnaire for Students – Development and Implementation”**

Dear Chairman & Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Optometric Association (MOA) submits this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 388 entitled, “Public Schools – Standardized Behavioral Health Questionnaire for Students – Development and Implementation” (SB 388). Passage of SB 388 will help identify underserved students to ensure receipt of needed behavioral health services to reach their full academic potential.

MOA is a 501 (c) 6 non-profit trade association representing hundreds of member optometrists practicing in almost every jurisdiction in the State. Many of our doctors specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of children with learning-related and developmental visual deficiencies. These visual deficiencies impact a child’s ability to learn in an academic setting and can often present as a behavioral or developmental issue.

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 behavioral health for learning difficulties, it is critical that all important factors (physical and emotional) be considered. This legislation would bring together a well-rounded stakeholder group of healthcare professionals and child advocates to streamline and improve both the identification and assessment process for children with potential behavioral health issues. In turn, parents and educators will have better tools to identify students in need of services and connect them with the right provider(s).

For the reasons stated herein, the Maryland Optometric Association urges this Committee to vote favorably on Senate Bill 388.

Sincerely,



Whitney Fahrman, O.D.  
MOA President