



**Committee:** House Ways and Means Committee  
**Bill Number:** House Bill 1054: School Health and Vision Services – Screenings and Eye Examinations  
**Hearing Date:** March 1, 2023  
**Position:** Support

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The Maryland Association of School Health Nurses (MASHN) supports *HB 1054, School Health and Vision Services – Screenings and Eye Examinations, as amended*. The bill provides for expansion of vision screening services to students in Maryland and establishes the State Vision for Maryland Program to support needed services identified in school-based vision screenings. Vision screening of students in Maryland was significantly negatively impacted during the COVID pandemic. Additional focus on vision screening and on provision of needed eye examinations and glasses is critical to ensuring students can first see to learn to read, and then in later elementary years and beyond, to be able to read to learn.

The bill's focus includes strategies to increase students screened for vision, resource identification for students referred and referral of specific students for a comprehensive eye examination. We support:

- Screening for additional students in Grade 3 or Grade 4. This screening is appropriate and indicated by professional associations and eye care professionals. MASHN raises the concern that this will be an additional mandate on already overburdened school health services staff in the face of a critical nursing shortage especially impacting School Nurses.
- Referral of students diagnosed with diagnosed neurodevelopmental delay to be referred for a comprehensive eye exam.
- Involvement of the Student Support Team in identifying additional resources for comprehensive eye examination and glasses for students who are referred, and for whom

School Health Services does not receive documentation on the established eye exam form from families that needed services were obtained within 60 days.

The bill outlines a requirement that the Eye Exam form shall be returned prior to enrollment.

- We strongly support additional options for enrollment so as not create barriers for enrollment. It is critical that principals waive the prohibition of enrollment for students for whom the eye exam form is not returned.
- Additional options as outlined include a plan for reporting the information required in the eye exam form to the County Board as developed by the school and the parent/guardian of the student.
- As vision screening is now required in the year that a student enters a school system, and results of the screenings and the number of students receiving the recommended services are reported to the Maryland Department of Health, we encourage this data to be considered as evidence of the plan for reporting the information required in the eye exam form to the County Board.

Across Maryland, School Nurses often experience that students do not receive indicated eye examinations and glasses after a need is identified through the vision screening process. A challenge is identification of resources. MASHN supports the establishment of the Vision for Maryland Program. The program would aid in meeting a health need that is often unmet for public school students in Maryland.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input and appreciate the support of Delegate Hill to enhance opportunities to support both vision screening for students and to connect students identified as in need of vision resources to eye examinations and glasses.

MASHN asks for a favorable report on HB 1054, as amended. Please direct inquiries to Elizabeth Elliott, President-Elect of the Maryland Association of School Health Nurses at [mdschoolnurses@gmail.com](mailto:mdschoolnurses@gmail.com).