



## TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

**HB 1242: Primary and Secondary Students- Vision and Hearing Studies and Evaluations**

**POSITION: Support**

**BY: Linda Kohn, President**

**DATE: March 5, 2025**

**The League of Women Voters supports House Bill 1242: Primary and Secondary Students- Vision and Hearing Studies and Evaluations. The League believes that early intervention measures are essential to help children to reach their full potential. It supports policies and programs at all levels in the community and government that promote the health and well-being, and encourage the full development of children.**

In a recent three-year study of the Vision for Baltimore Program in Baltimore City public schools, 33.8% of the students failed vision screening, with “a statistically higher failure rate in grades not mandated to have vision screening in Maryland.”<sup>1</sup> Unaddressed vision and hearing problems can have significant adverse academic, social, behavioral, and physical consequences that limit school success and reduce self-esteem.

While vision care, eye exams, and eyeglasses are covered benefits for children enrolled in Medicaid and MCHP (Maryland Children’s Health Plan), **not all children receive that care in a timely manner, even after a failed in-school vision screening. Treatment can be delayed or denied due to problems navigating the health care system. Families can face language barriers, administrative complexities, transportation issues, and ongoing problems finding providers.**

**House Bill 1242 would establish a workgroup to study and make recommendations on how to improve vision and hearing support services for Maryland students.** Educational and medical professionals would work together to study the prevalence of vision and hearing problems in the state, and identify the barriers that have been preventing children from receiving the services they require.

**Too many Maryland students fail to receive the help they need to succeed in school and after graduation, even if it’s a need as fundamental as a pair of glasses or a hearing aid. This is a matter of equity.** It is important that schoolchildren in our state receive essential vision and hearing services, and for that reason, **the League of Women Voters of Maryland urges a favorable report on House Bill 1242.**

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://iovs.arvojournals.org/article.aspx?articleid=2768629>