

TO: House Committee on Ways and Means

BILL: House Bill (HB) 1242 – Primary and Secondary Students – Vision and Hearing Studies and Evaluations

DATE: March 5, 2025

POSITION: Information

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The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) provides this information regarding **House Bill (HB) 1242 – *Primary and Secondary Students – Vision and Hearing Studies and Evaluations.***

### **HB 1242 Summary**

HB 1242 directs MSDE and the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to convene a workgroup to study and make recommendations on vision support treatments and services for students. HB 1242 also requires the Maryland State School Health Council to evaluate certain issues regarding vision and hearing difficulties for primary and secondary students, including the feasibility of developing a mechanism to facilitate reporting eye exam findings to local school systems or public health departments in a manner that is similar to how eye exam results are reported to the motor vehicle administration.

### **MSDE Information**

#### Background:

The [Maryland Code Annotated, Education § 7-401](#) (Md. Code Ann., Educ. § 7-401) requires MSDE and MDH to jointly develop public standards and guidelines for school health programs, including for vision and hearing screenings. The current requirement is for students to receive vision and hearing screening at entry to the school system, first grade, and eighth or ninth grade. The local health department or school system must also ensure that all students who have Individual Education Programs, or a Sec. 504 plan, or who evidence a decline in academic or social skills are screened. (Ed. Art. 7-404(a)(1)).

The results of the vision screenings must be reported to the county board or the county health department. The county board or the county health department shall report to MDH: (i) The results of the vision screenings; and (ii) To the extent practicable, the number of students receiving the recommended services.

The [Code of Maryland Regulations \(COMAR\) 13A.05.05.07](#) requires the local board of education or the local health department to provide and fund hearing and vision screenings and document the screening and any follow up services in the student's record.

[The Maryland School Health Council](#) includes representatives of MSDE, MDH, local education agencies, and local departments of health. The Council provides leadership for school health programs and supports local school health councils and state and local agencies. [The Maryland Vision Screening Guidelines](#), is a collaboration of the Council, MSDE, and MDH.

The school nurse is responsible for communicating with the parent /guardian(s) when a student has failed screening. This includes providing parent(s)/guardian(s) of a student who has failed screening with a recommendation/referral to see an optometrist or ophthalmologist. Additionally, the school nurse will assist the students and parent(s)/guardian(s) in selecting recommended services and identifying a healthcare provider for students with a usual source of care. Documentation of the screening results and receipt of services and interventions recommended by the optometrist, ophthalmologist, or other professional are provided on the Student Record Card 5 (SR5), including informing the appropriate school personnel of students who have vision concerns which may impede learning and/or require special care.

#### Implementation:

Some of the data needed for the workgroup is reported and collected annually, in collaboration with MDH Office of School Health, via MSDE's Annual School Health Services survey. The data collected, including the results of the hearing and vision screenings and the number of students screened, must be reported to MDH. Other topics listed in the bill, such as collection of policies and programs in each jurisdiction and available follow up services by jurisdiction, will require new surveys.

MSDE will require additional contracted resources to facilitate the workgroup, collaborate with MDH, develop and implement surveys and other data collection tools, and write the report and recommendations for workgroup approval.

MSDE respectfully requests consideration of these comments as HB 1242 is discussed and deliberated.

For further information, please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne (Executive Director of Government Affairs) at 410-767-0504, or [Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov](mailto:Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov).