

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2008 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 600

(Senator Conway, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Ways and Means

Schools - Early Intervention - Hearing and Vision Screenings

This bill eliminates the requirements for student hearing and vision screenings in grade four, five, or six and grade nine and replaces them with required screenings in grade one and grade eight or nine. Further screenings must also be done in accordance with policies adopted by local boards of education and local health departments. The parent or guardian of a student who does not pass a screening must report on the recommended services received by the student, and the report must be submitted on a form provided by the local board of education or the local health department.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill impacts local school systems and health departments.

Local Effect: Although the bill would require some adjustments to established local routines, the bill does not increase the number of required hearing and vision screenings. It is assumed that the necessary adjustments could be made to current screening schedules without materially affecting local budgets.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Each local board of education or the local health department must provide hearing and vision screenings for all students in local public schools, and each local health department must provide and fund the screenings for private and nonpublic schools in the jurisdiction. Unless evidence is presented that a student has been tested

within the past year, the screenings must take place in the years that a child enters a school system; enters fourth, fifth, or sixth grade; and enters ninth grade. Results of the screenings go in each child's permanent record and are reported to the local board of education or the local health department. Parents of students who fail the screenings are likewise given the results, but parents are not required to report on services their children receive.

Background: The *Maryland State School Health Guideline: Hearing and Vision Screening Manual* states that "School hearing and vision screening programs have clearly demonstrated that, all too frequently, some children enter school with impaired vision and hearing." The manual also notes that a vision or hearing impairment can affect a student's ability to learn and that early identification of an impairment can prevent detrimental educational effects. The manual says that the screenings attempt to identify problems that may need additional attention and help to determine appropriate referrals for students who may have impairments.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 653 (Delegate Hixson) – Ways and Means.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Legislative Services

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