

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE

BILL NO. House Bill 1342

PRINTER NO. 4576

AMOUNT

See Fiscal Impact

FUND

General Fund

DATE INTRODUCED

April 29, 2019

PRIME SPONSOR

Representative Brown

DESCRIPTION

House Bill 1342 amends the Public School Code of 1949 in section 1402 (relating to health services) and adds a new section 1403.1 (relating to vision screening and examinations) to provide for vision screenings for students.

The legislation requires that prior to admission to school for the first time, a parent or legal guardian of a child present to the school entity or nonpublic school certification that the child has passed or failed a vision screening conducted by a primary care provider, vision screener, ophthalmologist or optometrist within the previous 12 months.

The legislation requires the Department of Health’s Advisory Health Board to promulgate regulations establishing vision screening standards based on instrument-based vision screening technologies or visual acuity testing. The regulations shall take into consideration national guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics and American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus.

The legislation requires a school entity or nonpublic school to annually conduct vision screenings performed by school health personnel or vision screeners with specific training until a child completes fifth grade and at least every two years thereafter until graduation. House Bill 1342 provides that the results of the vision screening shall be supplied to the parent or legal guardian of the child.

The legislation requires a child who fails a required vision screening to have a comprehensive eye examination performed by an ophthalmologist or optometrist. It requires notification of a failed screening to be provided to the parent or legal guardian accompanied by notification of the requirement for a comprehensive examination that must be completed within 120 days or before the start of the next school year, whichever comes first, and a list of vision resources compiled by the Department of Health. The legislation also provides that the notification may include a form to be completed by the examining ophthalmologist or optometrist to be used for reporting the results of the examination. The report may include, but not be limited to the following: (1) the date of report; (2) the name, address and birthdate of the child; (3) the name of the child’s school; (4) a summary of significant findings;

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(5) recommended educational adjustments for the child, if any, which may include preferential seating in the classroom, eyeglasses for full-time or part-time use in school, sight saving eyeglasses or any other recommendation; and (6) the name, address and signature of the examiner. Further, the examination report may be accompanied by an envelope for return of the form to school health personnel so the completion status and result of the examination may be recorded.

The legislation specifies that no child shall be denied admission or excluded from attending school for the reason that the parent or legal guardian failed to furnish a report of the child's vision screening or to have an examination completed upon failure of the vision screening.

Further, the legislation also provides that a school entity or nonpublic school is not required to provide a comprehensive eye exam or be held financially responsible for the treatment of a child who fails the required vision screening.

The legislation is scheduled to take effect in 60 days, and the provisions apply to school years beginning after the regulations are promulgated by the Department of Health's Advisory Health Board

FISCAL IMPACT:

The enactment of House Bill 1342 will have no fiscal impact on Commonwealth funds. The administrative responsibilities delegated to the Department of Health to establish vision screening standards and a list of vision-related resources for parents is routine to its operations and can be accomplished within its existing general government operations budget.

School entities and nonpublic schools will incur a minimal fiscal impact as the legislation specifies that they are not required to provide comprehensive eye exams or be held financially responsible for the treatment of a child who fails the required vision screening and they routinely currently notify parents of school vision screening results.