



Support Children's Eye Health and Vision for Learning

An Act to Establish a Children's Vision Screening Registry

Rep. Barber, HD3109 and Sen. Lewis, SD1517

Ten percent of preschoolers and 25% of school age children have vision problems that require comprehensive eye care. Recent studies show a strong correlation between a child's vision and the acquisition of early literacy skills. In 2004, Massachusetts became the first state in the country to pass legislation requiring vision screenings for children entering kindergarten. However, this law has no reporting requirement or mechanism to collect and evaluate data; there is no way to measure the law's effectiveness or respond to areas of need. Health care providers, educators, public health professionals and parents report gaps in systems to assure universal vision screening of young children. As a result, many children enter kindergarten with undetected and uncorrected vision problems.

This legislation instructs DPH to create a vision screening registry, similar to the immunization registry, to house data related to children's vision screening results. The bill also establishes a special commission on children's vision, which will be charged with developing recommendations for improving DPH's registry and overseeing children's vision health in Massachusetts.

- ✚ All children must have the chance to develop their best eye health and vision for learning
- ✚ 1 in 4 children have a vision disorder--the most common disabling condition of childhood
- ✚ Lazy Eye, affecting 2-4% of children (3,000 children in Massachusetts each year), results in permanent vision loss if not diagnosed and treated during childhood
- ✚ There is a strong correlation between vision and a child's ability to acquire literacy skills
- ✚ Children from low-income families, and African American and Hispanic children, are at greater risk for having undiagnosed and untreated vision problems

A registry is needed to guide interventions to improve the eye health and school readiness of children throughout the Commonwealth. It will assist in:

- ❖ **Eliminating barriers to learning**
- ❖ **Preventing unnecessary vision loss**
- ❖ **Addressing inequities regarding access to comprehensive eye care**

Please support HD3109/SD1517- an Act to Establish a Children's Vision Screening Registry

Thank you.

Children's Vision Massachusetts -a seventy member coalition of parents, nurses, pediatricians, educators, public health professionals, optometrists and ophthalmologists

For additional information: Kathy Majzoub, Co-Chair, Children's Vision Massachusetts
kmajzoub@preventblindness.org