



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Dennis R. Schrader, Secretary

March 8, 2022

The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary
Chair, House Ways and Means Committee
Room 131, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: HB 1233 – Public Schools – Health and Vision Services – Required Screenings and Eye Examinations – Letter of Information

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) respectfully submits this letter of information on House Bill (HB) 1233 – Public Schools – Health and Vision Services – Required Screenings and Eye Examinations. HB 1233 alters the number of mandated vision screenings for students, requires a county board of education to ensure that certain students receive an eye examination and eyeglasses, and establishes the Pediatric Vision Program and the Vision for Maryland Program to expand vision support services in schools.

HB 1233 requires that MDH’s primary contact employee for the School-Based Health Centers (SBHC) ensure the implementation and oversight of the Vision for Maryland Program. This program will spread “Vision to Learn” vision support services from Baltimore City to all counties in the State, adding five (5) counties per fiscal year.

Vision and hearing screening in public schools is currently led by MDH’s School Health Services program. School Health Services develops and standardizes guidelines for school nurses, in partnership with the Maryland State Department of Education, and provides leadership and assistance to local health services programs. The School Health Services program is separate from SBHCs. SBHCs are healthcare clinics located at or near schools, and have clinic staff that are employed by a sponsoring agency that operates the clinic. These sponsoring agencies may be federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), local health departments, or other provider practices. While SBHCs may collaborate with school nurses, school nurses are usually part of the local school system, and separate from the SBHC clinic providers.

HB 1233 will increase the volume of vision screenings, eye exams, and glasses reimbursed by Medicaid. MDH requires that all Healthchoice Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) that serve children to offer and promote vision screenings, eye exams, and cover eyeglasses for these children.

To accomplish this goal, these MCOs will be required to bolster their vision-screening programs and be required to reach out to these populations to ensure these screenings are received. Further, for children who have a positive vision screening, the MCO will be required to ensure yearly outreach is continued so the child receives an annual eye exam. These efforts will respond to the critical need of these children to receive vision services that are already covered by Medicaid and its MCOs. MDH estimates the fiscal impact of the bill will be \$5.2 million in total funds per year, with \$2.9 million coming from federal funds and \$2.3 million coming from State general funds.

If you have any questions, please contact Heather Shek, Director of Governmental Affairs, at heather.shek@maryland.gov or (410) 260-3190.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dennis R. Schrader". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Dennis R. Schrader
Secretary