



H.2231: An Act improving child eye health

S.136: An Act improving child eye care

THE NEXT STEP: develop a Statewide Children's Vision Health System

WHAT would that do?

- ✚ Vision screening for all preschoolers, from 3 years of age
- ✚ Mandated reporting for resource allocation
- ✚ Establishment of a multi-stakeholder Vision Advisory Council within Department of Public Health, with accountability to the state legislature, to consult with and advise the department on matters related to the establishment, maintenance, operation and evaluation of children's vision and eye health in the Commonwealth

WHY does Massachusetts need this System?

- "Vision disorders are the **most prevalent disabling childhood conditions.**" Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- **1 in 4 children - over 250,000 in Massachusetts - cannot see the board or read a book without eyeglasses.**
- **A child who has never experienced clear vision does not know to report a problem seeing, and may not show outward signs of a vision impairment.**
- Preschool vision screening is critical to improving long-term vision outcomes. Each year, **over 2,000 Massachusetts children will develop amblyopia** - a condition that can **lead to permanent vision loss** if not detected and treated early in childhood. Children younger than age 7 are more responsive to treatment.
- There are **significant gaps and inequities in access, education, awareness and communication** with the current Massachusetts system - **many children do not receive the vision care that they need.**
- **Disparities in vision impairment are increasing** and are greatest for African American, Hispanic children and low-income children. "The disparity in vision impairment and blindness for children and adolescents 17 years and younger from low income families grew to almost three times that of those from high income families." Healthy People 2020 (*HealthyPeople.gov*)
- Visual functioning is a strong predictor of academic performance in school-age children. Early detection, uniform systems of referral, accessible care across geographic areas, and accountability, are critical components of an equitable system that will lead to improvements in children's visual health *and* learning, and ensure health equity across the lifespan.

To eliminate correctable vision impairment, prevent permanent vision loss, and support learning -

WE NEED YOUR HELP – PLEASE SUPPORT H2231 / S.136

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Children's Vision Massachusetts is a coalition of parents, nurses, pediatricians, educators, public health professionals, and eye doctors committed to ensuring that all children have the opportunity to develop their best possible vision. Our **mission** is to build a statewide, systematic approach to vision care for children that is universal, comprehensive, collaborative, cost effective, accessible, multidisciplinary, dynamic, culturally competent, sustainable and evidence-based.

childrensvisionmassachusetts.org