**Email as soon as possible or by FEBRUARY 28THth, to:**  Cindy.Friedman@masenate.gov and **John.Lawn@mahouse.gov** **and copy to** Committee Counsel Keith Macfarland, at keith.macfarland@mahouse.gov.

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[YOUR LETTERHEAD]

The Honorable Cindy F. Friedman,

Senate Chair Joint Committee on Health Care Financing

State House,

Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable John J. Lawn, Jr.,

House Chair Joint Committee on Health Care Financing

State House,

Boston, MA 02133

**H2231 An Act improving child eye health / S136 An Act improving child eye care**

Dear Honorable Chairs,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.  I write to submit written testimony to the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing in support of H2231 ***An Act improving child eye health***, and S136 ***An Act improving child eye care***. I am grateful to Representatives Barber and Garballey and Senator Moore, who sponsor this legislation.

**[I am a….** *professional (name e.g. school nurse, eye doctor etc)/or / parent advocate /***or** a member of Children’s Vision Massachusetts (CVMA). I am a member of this coalition because/ or **[***background on why you support children’s vision- personal or professional story].*The *vision* of CVMA coalition is that all children in Massachusetts have the opportunity to develop and maintain their best possible vision for optimal growth, development and learning.

*If you would like to add some vision facts or further experience of your own do so, and/or use the info below.*

It has been well recognized by health care providers, educators, public health professionals and parents, and most recently heard at the 2019 public meetings of the *Special Commission on Childrens Vision and Eye Health*, that significant gaps exist in the Commonwealth’s current system of pediatric vision care. These gaps are experienced most acutely by low-income minority children, those living in rural areas, and children with disabilities, and have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Child vision care gaps when not addressed are costly to our children’s well-being, and to the state. Untreated childhood vision disorders have far-reaching effects - negatively impacting important physical, social and emotional growth activities of childhood, causing struggle for children in reading and learning, and reducing future full child and adult potential. Unnecessary permanent adult blindness can occur simply because children do not receive the comprehensive eye care required during their childhood. These gaps are preventable.

H.2231 and S136 establish a universal, statewide data system for vision screening, comprehensive eye exam, diagnoses, and follow up care of children in schools and doctor’s offices to ensure all children receive appropriately timed preventative and corrective vision care. These bills also address identified gaps with a systematic approach – creation of a permanent, collaborative, cross-agency, Vision Advisory Council to consult and advise the Department of Public Health on the establishment, maintenance, operation and evaluation of children’s vision and eye health. This step ensures a firm basis from which all children across the Commonwealth can benefit.

As you are aware, H2231 and S136 were both reported favorably from their Joint Committees – H2231 from the Joint Committee on Public Health, and S136 from the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities. These committees recognized it is time to ensure equitable vision health for all children across the Commonwealth.

As an advocate for children’s vision and eye health, I thank you for your consideration of these bills and respectfully request a favorable report**.**

Sincerely

Your name.

(Your title, or place of work, if appropriate)