



*Testimony to the Senate Education Committee – February, 2021*

*In Support of SB 62 – Relating to standards for school-administered vision screenings.*

Chair Baumgardner and members of the Senate Committee on Education, I want to thank you for the opportunity to respond in support of SB 62 that seeks to update Kansas legislation setting the standard for vision screening in schools.

Vision in young children is profoundly important to learning success. Research has shown that healthy sight plays a role in reducing poverty, improving reading readiness, increased graduation rates, attainment of developmental milestones, and positive social relationships (Atkinson et al., 2002; Basch, 2011; Davidson & Quinn, 2011). However, parents may be unaware of vision difficulties, which makes routine vision screening, follow-up, and referral vitally important to detect vision problems in children before the child's development is impeded.

In 2017, multiple organizations across the state of Kansas recognized the need for updated, evidence-based guidance for vision screening in Kansas schools. That fall, Envision, Inc. hosted the first state-wide Vision Summit, with over 25 organizations and government agencies forming the Kansas Vision Coalition. This began the process of developing the current edition of *Kansas Vision Screening Requirements and Guidelines, June 2018, Sixth Edition*.

While this guideline provides guidance in best, current practice in school vision screening, Kansas law, implemented in 1959, does not represent current best practice (references the Snellen chart and dictates every-two-year spacing of vision screening) and needs to be updated to support this guideline and to promote maintenance of evidence-based practice going forward.

SB 62 makes the following positive changes:

- Designates vision screenings be conducted according to the most recent edition of the Kansas vision screening requirements and guidelines and includes referrals for eye examinations and necessary follow-ups,
- Defines "vision screener" as any school nurse, or the nurse's designee, or other person who is trained to administer a vision screening test to students in the state of Kansas,
- Updates the grades of required vision screening. This provides more frequent screening during the early years when students are developing reading skills. Also, early identification of vision conditions such as amblyopia at this age provides the best chance of successful intervention, and
- Provides a framework to data gathering and reporting of aggregate data and maintenance of current, evidence-based practice going forward.

I support SB 62 as crucial legislation needed to provide consistent evidence-based vision screening practices in schools across the state of Kansas.

Respectfully submitted,

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