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Written Neutral Testimony

SB 62 - Updating student vision screenings and the standards, and establishing a Vision Health and School Readiness Commission

Presented to the Senate Education Committee

Thursday, Feb. 4, 2021

By

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Kansas State Board of Education

Chairwoman Baumgardner, Vice Chairwoman Erickson, Ranking Minority Sykes and Members of the Committee:

SB 62 amends the Kansas vision screening laws that were first established in 1959 and reflects the current evidence-based practices. It also includes requirements for vision screening for preschoolers and provides for a commission that would regularly review and update the guidelines as technology and research change. The bill would require the following basic vision screening without charge: 1) an annual screening for every child participating in IDEA Part B programs; 2) a screening at least once each school year for students enrolled in kindergarten and grades one, two, three, five, seven, and ten in a school district or an accredited nonpublic school; and 3) a screening for any student enrolled in a school district or an accredited nonpublic school within a student's first year of admission. Students in accredited nonpublic schools are to be screened where they are enrolled or upon request by the student's parent or guardian by the board of education of the district in which the student resides.

The basic vision screening would be performed by a vision screener designated by the local board of education or by an accredited nonpublic school. Vision screeners would be required to follow the most recent state vision screening guidelines for performing vision screening. The parents or legal guardian would be notified if the student needs to be referred for an examination by an ophthalmologist or optometrist.

The bill also requires the State Board of Education to establish the Kansas Children's Vision Health and School Readiness Commission. The bill lists requirements for membership and duties of the

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Commission as well as establishing a system to collect data from school health personnel concerning screening results and referral outcomes. The bill specifies that the Commission membership will receive no remuneration.

Some school districts receive in-kind services from medical professionals for vision screening services. Any additional services not covered by the in-kind services would be borne by the local board.

Again, since this was not an issue considered by the Kansas State Board of Education to be on its list of Legislative Priorities, we are providing neutral testimony.

It has been several years since the statute was updated and there are many current screening best practices which this bill would implement for Kansas students so it is likely time to revisit the statute. The State Board of Education would be required to appoint the membership of the Commission the bill establishes. The Commission is likely a way to ensure, that in the future, the vision screening of Kansas students will be updated in a timely manner.