

**Statement of Audrey Blondin  
Public Health Committee  
February 26, 2007  
HB 5760**

Members of the Committee:

My name is Audrey Blondin. I am a practicing attorney in Torrington and am co-founder & treasurer of VOSH-CT (Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity), where for nine years we have run a yearly clinic in San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua, performing approximately 2,300 eye exams in a 4 day period. I also am a part-time student in the certificate program at the University of Connecticut School of Public Health and, finally, manage the optometric practice of my husband, Dr. Matthew Blondin, in Torrington.

Dr. Blondin has been in practice in Torrington, Conn., for 28 years and is the only remaining solo eye care provider in that city, as well as the only eye care provider in the entire Northwest part of the state that is willing to see state assistance patients.

As a consequence, he is booked completely solid at least 2 months in advance, making it extremely difficult for children to be seen in a timely manner when requested by their physician or school nurse.

Passage of this bill will insure that all children are seen before they begin school and have their eye care needs taken care of before it becomes a crisis situation as a result of a school nurse or physician eye examination that must be immediately attended to when there is no time at all for these patients to be seen for months on end.

A school nurse screening or a pediatrician physical examination is not an eye examination by a licensed, trained eye care professional. Only a licensed, trained eye care provider can provide the necessary diagnosis & treatment of eye care problems. Every child should have this eye care assessment completed BEFORE they enter school, so that unknown vision problems do not interfere with the learning process.

It is said that you can tell a lot about a person by the friends they keep.

If that is the case, then this proposal for children's eye examinations is in very good company indeed.

You have a copy of a letter of endorsement from the American Public Health Association. Let me quote a portion of it:

*"House Bill 5760 will assure that each child will have an eye examination by an eye doctor prior to public school enrollment. As an organization concerned about the delivery of children's health care services, we support HB 5760.*

*APHA is committed to supporting access to and delivery of services to children involving immunizations and vision examinations for children. We recognize that*

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*children are at high risk for having undetected vision problems, which are often unknown to parents, children and their teachers."*

And, then there is the National PTA. They issued a policy statement that also endorses children's eye examinations. I'd like to read a portion of that also.

*"Early diagnosis and treatment of children's vision problems is a necessary component to school readiness and academic learning; and that vision screening is not a substitute for a complete eye and vision evaluation by an eye doctor. Comprehensive eye and vision examinations by an optometrist or ophthalmologist are important for all children first entering school and regularly throughout their school-aged years to ensure healthy eyes and adequate vision skills essential for successful academic achievements."*

Members of the committee, need I say more?

Please support HB 5760. Let's make sure all children enter school ready to learn by giving them a comprehensive eye exam.

Thank you.