



35 Cold Spring Road, Suite 211
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
860 529-1900
www.cteyes.org

Statement of Testimony of Laura Dake Roche, OD
President, Connecticut Association of Optometrists
March 7, 2016
House Bill 5550 - Education Committee

Representative Fleischmann, Senator Slossberg and members of the Education Committee:

I am Dr. Laura Dake Roche, a licensed and board certified doctor of optometry practicing in Naugatuck, Conn., for 31 years. I am the president of the Connecticut Association of Optometrists. I see patients of all ages, starting at age 3, and in the course of my current practice, have served on the Naugatuck Head Start Medical Advisory Board for over 10 years. I see many children, preschool and older, as a result of failed vision screenings at school.

I would like to make brief comments in support of section 6 of House Bill 5550, *An Act Concerning Various Revisions and Additions to the Education Statutes*. This revision would simply provide clarity to parents in the notice they receive if their child fails a visual screening.

It is estimated that over 70 percent of learning is visual, and children's vision is so important that the federal government included children's vision care in the list of Essential Benefits in the Affordable Care Act. I think we can all agree on visions' importance.

The revision we are supporting simply adds clarity to the notice parents receive after the child fails a vision screening, formally recommending that the child should be examined by a licensed optometrist or ophthalmologist. As it is now, the form tells the parent the child failed the screening without any real direction.

If the parent takes the child to their pediatrician, the pediatrician will perform another screening, and perhaps then recommend the child have a formal comprehensive eye exam. The current *Department of Education Vision Screening Guidelines* already recommends that the child be screened twice before "failing," so this would have the potential of three screenings before actually getting to an eye doctor, significantly delaying potential treatment. Interestingly, the new draft guidelines already suggest that the parent notification form includes the language that is now in Section 6, perhaps as a result of our discussions the Optometry and Ophthalmology communities had with you on this issue last session.

Dr. David Jeng of West Hartford, an Ophthalmologic Doctor, has submitted a statement to the committee on this bill and I would like to quote from a portion of it:

Some of the newer screening technologies are much more beneficial than the typical reading of the eye chart in school or at the pediatrician we all remember. They have the ability to help diagnose visual conditions sooner but as in any health screening they are unable to match the thoroughness of a comprehensive exam which looks at the other aspects of vision including color vision, vision fields, binocularity, focusing ability and overall eye health. Any screening process must recognize that screening itself does not substitute for a full examination and must have an appropriate system of referral for those children that do not pass.

Please support the simple revision contained in Section 6 so that we can improve the chances that children receive the vision care they need. Above all, thank you for your concern for our children.