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Statement of David Jeng, MD
House Bill 5550
Education Committee
March 7, 2016

Sen. Slossberg, Rep. Fleischmann and members of the committee:

My name is David Jeng, MD. I am a licensed Ophthalmologist and practice at Solinsky EyeCare, LLC in West Hartford, CT. I am a general ophthalmologist with a special focus on retinal diseases. Our practice sees many children who have vision problems. We also often end up seeing the late sequelae of children who have not had proper eye care, such as permanently decreased vision.

I would like to offer brief comments in support of Section 6 Subsection (a) of House Bill 5550, *An Act Concerning Various Revisions and Additions to the Education Statutes*. This section would revise the notice that is sent to a student's parent or guardian when they have failed school-based vision screening. The change would be to recommend to the parent or guardian that the child be specifically examined by an optometrist or ophthalmologist. The Section is reprinted below.

Sec. 6. Subsection (a) of section 10-214 of the 2016 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2016*):

(a) Each local or regional board of education shall provide annually to each pupil in kindergarten and grades one and three to five, inclusive, a vision screening, using a Snellen chart, or equivalent screening. The superintendent of schools shall give written notice to the parent or guardian of each pupil (1) who is found to have any defect of vision or disease of the eyes, with a brief statement describing such defect or disease and a recommendation for the pupil to be examined by a licensed optometrist or ophthalmologist, and (2) who did not receive such vision screening, with a brief statement explaining why such pupil did not receive such vision screening.

If a child has failed a vision screening, which tends to be a fairly quick process, then this indicates they may have issues that need further review by an optometrist or ophthalmologist. The parent or guardian should be told this and they should be specifically told that their child

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needs a further vision examination by an optometrist or ophthalmologist (as opposed to a pediatrician or other doctor). That is the change proposed here and it is a simple and good one.

Undiagnosed and untreated vision problems in children are recognized as urgent national public health concerns. This is emphasized in the Accountable Care Act which promotes comprehensive eye exams as an essential benefit in insurance plans. It is estimated that 75-90% of all classroom learning involves the visual system.

Some of the newer screening technologies are much more beneficial than the typical reading of the eye chart in school or at the pediatrician that 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 other aspects of vision including color vision, visual 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.

For these reason, I believe this small additional to the current law will improve it and help improve the vision needs of children in our state. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Jeng', is written in a cursive style.

David Jeng, MD