

Statement of Tom Margius, O.D.
H.B. 7253, An Act Concerning Minor Revisions and Additions to the Education Statutes
Education Committee
March 16, 2017

Senator Slossberg, Senator Boucher, Representative Fleischmann and members of the committee:

My name is Tom Margius, O.D. I am a licensed Optometrist and practice in Milford, Connecticut and surrounding towns. I provide vision care services to families and have provided services to pediatric patients for over 25 years.

I would like to offer brief comments in support of Section 5 of H.B. 7253, *An Act Concerning Minor 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 the vision screening. The change would be to recommend to the parent or guardian that the child be examined by an Optometrist or Ophthalmologist. The Section is reprinted below.

Sec. 5. Subsection (a) of section 10-214 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2017*):

(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 an optometrist licensed under chapter 380 or an ophthalmologist licensed under chapter 370, and (2) who did not receive such vision screening, with a brief statement explaining why such pupil did not receive such vision screening..

A school vision screening tends to be a fairly quick process. A student who fails that screening 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 needs a further vision examination. 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 Affordable Care Act which promotes comprehensive eye examinations as an essential benefit in insurance plans. It is estimated that 75-90 percent of all classroom learning involves the visual system.

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 who do not pass.

For this reason, I believe that this addition to the current law will improve it and help improve the vision outcomes of children in our state. Thank you.