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**March 10, 2020**

**Insurance and Real Estate Committee**

**Supporting Written testimony from  
Connecticut Society of Eye Physicians  
Connecticut Dermatology and Dermatologic Surgery Society  
Connecticut ENT Society  
Connecticut Urology Society  
on**

**H.B. No. 5257 (RAISED) AN ACT REQUIRING HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR PRESCRIPTION EYEGASSES FOR COVERED DEPENDENT CHILDREN WHO ARE YOUNGER THAN NINETEEN YEARS OF AGE**

Society views children differently than adults, and for good reason. Children are not simply small grown-ups. They go through developmental periods that can permanently define their adult capabilities. Among these vulnerable areas is visual development. The most critical period of visual development is between birth and around age 10. Failure to properly imprint vision in this period can lead to permanent visual impairment. This is why we screen as many children as possible as often as possible in this age group. This body has been very helpful in mandating documented screenings for entry into school and throughout school. Older children can still experience problems, although not permanent changes in vision, if they have inadequate vision during school. Difficulty in seeing the smartboards or in reading texts can adversely impact learning and class performance.

While current law adequately promotes multiple screenings in childhood, the best way to detect eye disease in a broad population over time, finding children with vision problems, it does no good if we don't work to correct those problems. Many childhood vision issues can be adequately treated with a simple pair of glasses, but glasses aren't always covered by insurance. For some reason, insurers don't always view the eyes as part of the body. Providing this necessary therapy to prevent childhood impairment can force parents to make difficult financial decisions and can present a significant hardship. Imagine being forced to choose between your child's vision or performance at school and feeding your family.



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This bill acts to correct this problem by requiring coverage of a pair of glasses for dependent children who are vulnerable to visual impairment. This is already covered for our most vulnerable kids on HUSKY, but is not always available for children with other insurance. Closing this gap will benefit not only the affected children and their families, but society at large, as we allow these kids to develop into productive adults. This bill provides the added benefit of recognizing that kids are kids, and may break or lose a pair of glasses through a year's time. The bill provides for provision of a second pair if the first is lost. We would ask that this be amended to include breakage as well, which is also common.

In summary, this bill, especially if amended to include coverage for a broken pair of glasses is an excellent complement to the legislature's wisdom in already requiring recurrent screening for vision problems through childhood. It will help many children who might otherwise have permanent vision problems or educational setbacks, and will save the state money in not having to provide support to these patients in other ways. We urge your support of this bill.