



BILL SUMMARY

SF 2251 Student Eye Care

Status of Bill: House Calendar
Committee: House Education (passed committee 23-0)
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Background:

Children need healthy eyes and normal vision development to be able to learn. Studies show that nearly 25% of all school-age children have vision programs and approximately 80% of all learning during a child's first 12 years comes through vision.

According to the Optometric Association, undiagnosed and untreated vision related learning problems are significant contributors to early reading difficulties and may lead to special education classification. The earlier a vision problem is found and treated, the less negative impact it has on a child's development.

Vision screenings vary in scope and are designed to detect potential problems but are not eye exams. A professional examination is still necessary before a child enters school.

A New Jersey study showed that eye exams were cost effective because they saved state special education budgets millions of dollars by helping students before they need special education services.

Summary:

Senate File 2521 requires that a parent or guardian who registers a child for kindergarten or pre-school be given a vision card provided by the Iowa Optometric Association. The goal is to have every child receive an eye examination by age seven.

The law also says a special education student may receive an eye examination by a licensed ophthalmologist or optometrist in conjunction with the adoption of an individualized education program. This can be done as part of a perceptual visual evaluation supervised by a professional member of the student's individualized education program or by a school psychologist. The parent or guardian is responsible for ensuring a student receives an eye examination if recommended.

Local area education agencies, in collaboration with local community organizations, shall make every effort to provide vision screening services to children age two through four.

If enacted, the bill will apply to school years beginning July 1, 2009.

Amendments

H-8288 – Committee on Education

Requires that vision card provided by the Iowa Optometric Association must first be approved by the Iowa department of education.